

LITTLEDENE





# LITLEDENE

A NEW ZEALAND RURAL  
COMMUNITY

*By*

H. C. D. SOMERSET

NEW ZEALAND COUNCIL FOR  
EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH

1938

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## FOREWORD

THE New Zealand Council for Educational Research has set itself the task of surveying the educational agencies of the country, preparatory to building up a body of thought that may help the responsible authorities in projecting constructive policies. The Council wisely argued that educational practice can be evaluated only in relation to the social and economic background of the community which that practice is intended to serve. Hence this book. Much of the rural life of New Zealand is typified by the life of Littledene, for Littledene bears much the same relation to the life in New Zealand as a whole, as does Middletown to the life of the United States of America.

In contradistinction to the approach adopted in *Middletown*—that of an attempted scientific objectivity by investigators from outside the community—the method adopted in surveying Littledene is that of enlightened subjectivity by an investigator who has played a very considerable part in the community for a number of years. Mr. Somerset had, however, been a close student of sociology and education for years before he lived in Littledene, so that, while entering very fully into the life there, he has always seen it in due relation to the world outside.

Whether the objective or subjective approach to the understanding of society is more fruitful, depends probably upon the attitude of mind of the age in which the study is made. Both are necessary, for since the study of human life is made by a human being who lives within

its orbit, complete objective detachment is patently impossible, and even if it were possible, there would be a grave risk of the investigator failing to discover the "heart within the beast."

However, Mr. Somerset was fortunate enough in approaching his task to add to a scholarly equipment the liberating experience of a European and American journey during the actual writing of his book, which acted as a corrective to any distortion of perspective that might arise from the too close proximity of the life he would describe. Mr. Somerset possesses the rare association of calmness of mind and unquenchable enthusiasm which has long been the object of admiration to his friends, an admiration which this book will certainly not diminish.

The Dominion is approaching the celebration of its Centennial, and to the social stock-taking that the more thoughtful citizens will naturally attempt, this book should form a valuable contribution.

JAMES SHELLEY

*January 1938*

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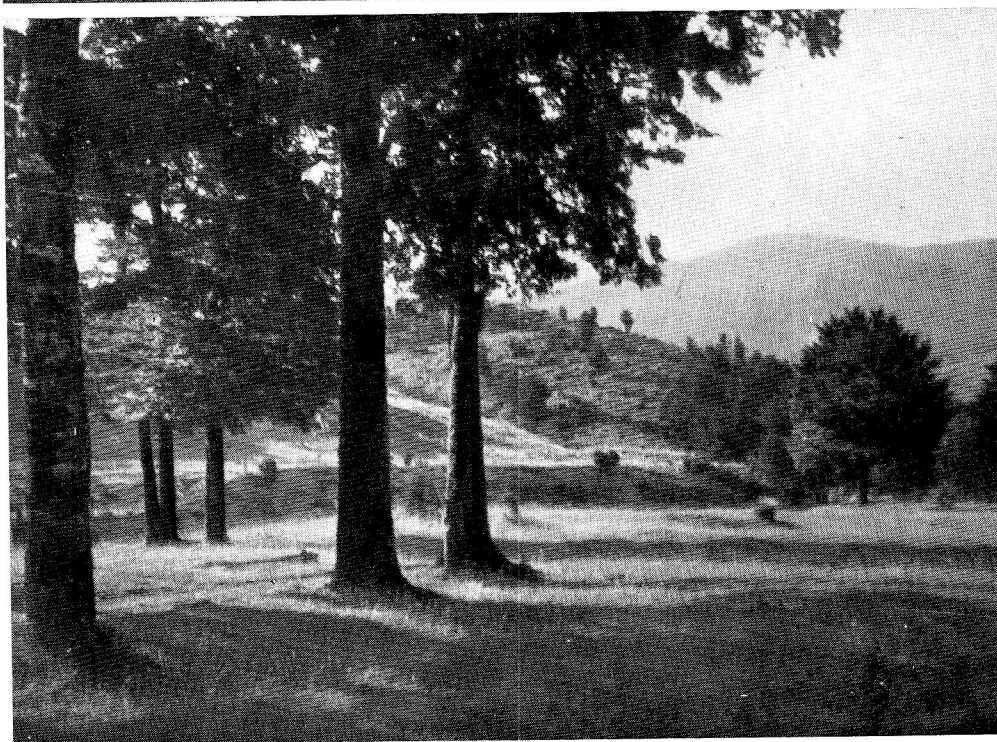
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LITTLEDENE







In the foothills of Littledene.

Sheep-farming country. Native beeches in the foreground.

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## CHAPTER I

### THE GEOGRAPHICAL, HISTORICAL AND ECONOMIC PATTERNS

LITLEDENE is the name given, for purposes of this study, to a rural area situated in the province of Canterbury in the South Island of New Zealand. The geographical limits of the present survey were determined by mapping the social and economic boundaries of the township.<sup>1</sup> This process gave an area for consideration of approximately 350 square miles, with a population of 1,800. Within this area are contained (a) the township of Littledene, (b) the county of the same name, (c) outlying portions of three other counties. But the name implies much more than a geographical unit: in these pages it is intended to denote all the social factors that go towards the making of a typical New Zealand rural community.

Littledene is very new. Eighty-five years ago it was merely the far end of an uninhabited tussock-covered portion of Canterbury Plain, bordered on two sides by swift rivers and in the rear by the foothills of the Southern Alps. Dense forest covered these hills and encroached on the plain, which at this spot is about 900 feet above sea level. In the early days the hill country, with its swift rivers, deep gorges and contributory streams

<sup>1</sup>See Appendix.

without end, with its forest of great trees linked branch to branch by the white clematis, was a place of great natural beauty. The bright-plumaged native birds, flitting through the undergrowth of evergreen shrubs and delicate ferns, helped to make the scene one of entrancing loveliness. Before the white man came the Maoris from the coast made frequent hunting raids in search of wood pigeons and parrots, but there is no evidence that they ever made a permanent settlement there.

The first white settler arrived in 1851. He secured 7,400 acres of plain lands as a sheep run and built a house of sod and rubble. Within a year four runs of a total area of nearly 50,000 acres had been taken up. It was the forest land, however, that brought the township into being. Canterbury had been colonised by the Canterbury Association in 1850: the rapid growth of Christchurch, the capital of the province, caused such a demand for timber that in 1854 a small party of pit sawyers prospecting for trees made their headquarters at Littledene and the community was born. The first power mill was opened in 1860 by a remittance man from England and for the next 40 years sawmilling was the chief industry of the place.

The mills made the township; they attracted labourers and capital; they demanded roads and eventually necessitated the railway. As the felling of timber cleared the low hills and nearby plain, small farms arose. Those who came as sawyers to tear down the age-old forest stayed as farmers to build up a new pastoral industry. Time passed. The bad times of the seventies gave place to the better days of the eighties when the newly discovered process of refrigeration opened up the English market for frozen lamb. The nineties saw a period of

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increasing land values: the larger sheep runs were subdivided into small holdings and experiments in mixed farming were made.

The early settlers were mainly English immigrants who came to New Zealand under the Canterbury Association Scheme which endeavoured to apply the principles of colonisation laid down by Edward Gibbon Wakefield. The Wakefield plan aimed at transplanting a vertical slice of English society to the new land. An adequate supply of labourers was assured by fixing the price of land high enough to prevent too easy a transition from the land-labouring to the land-owning classes. From the funds acquired by the sale of land, reserves were put aside for churches and schools.

Some of the farm labourers who came to Canterbury under this scheme found their way to the sawmills of Littledene. The early run-holders came with their flocks from New South Wales where sheep-farming had long been established on a large scale. In the seventies a number of Austrian immigrants arrived to find work in the mills and on road-construction; some of their descendants are still in Littledene, but the majority drifted away when sawmilling came to an end.

*Farms and Farming To-day.* An actual count of the number of holdings within the area under survey gave the number as 350; the economic background of Littledene may be understood through a study of these holdings which include all areas used for farming, but exclude merely residential holdings in the centre of the township. The total area of these farm holdings is 220,724 acres. Nearly half the land has been ploughed, cultivated or sown in English grasses; the rest is still in tussock and other native grasses. The largest farm contains 15,300 acres, but most of this run is barren and mountainous.

The following table shows the subdivision of land in the Littledene area:—

<i>Area of farms</i>	<i>Number</i>
Under 20 acres - - - - -	88
20-100 acres - - - - -	75
100-500 acres - - - - -	101
500-1000 acres - - - - -	46
1000-5000 acres - - - - -	33
Over 5000 acres - - - - -	7
Total - - - - -	<u>350</u>

These farms support animals as follows:—

Sheep - - - - -	110,000
Lambs - - - - -	75,000
Horses - - - - -	1,250
Cattle - - - - -	4,500
Pigs - - - - -	1,250

The cultivated area grows the following crops:—

	<i>Acres</i>
Wheat - - - - -	4,400
Oats for threshing - - - - -	1,200
Oats for chaff - - - - -	3,700
Oats for green feed - - - - -	2,000
Turnips, rape, and other winter feed for sheep - - - - -	10,000
Grass and clover reserved for hay -	1,200

Lucerne as a fodder crop is eminently suited to the plains, but has not yet made its way into Littledene.

The area is thinly populated: an average hundred acres supports somewhat less than one human being, together with the following animals:—

Sheep - - - - -	50
Lambs - - - - -	40
Cattle - - - - -	2
Horses - - - - -	Slightly less than one

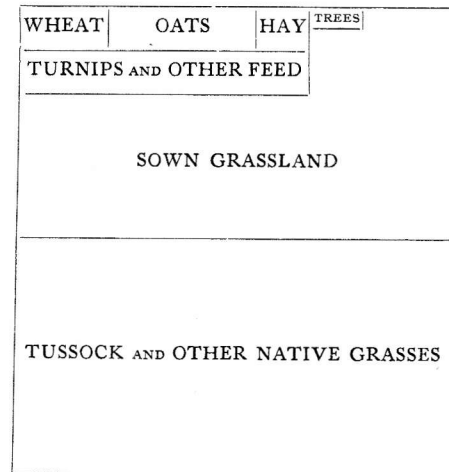
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Then this average hundred acres grows the following:

	<i>Acres</i>
Tussock and other native grasses	- 50
Sown grassland	- - - - 38
Turnips and other winter feed	- - 6
Oats for chaff	- - - - 2
Oats for threshing	- - - - 1
Hay	- - - - less than 1
Plantations for shelter	- - - - $\frac{1}{4}$

This averaging gives, however, little real idea of the intensity of farming because the soil and climate vary



*How Land is utilized in Littledene*

considerably within the area. The land ranges in height above sea-level from 500 feet on the plain to 4000 feet in the remoter sheep runs. The yearly average rainfall is 35 inches in the township; it is much greater in the uplands, where no records have been kept. The land is swampy in some parts and suited to dairying; in others, particularly on the plains, the soil is so porous that it

A survey of the nature of farming in the district was made by studying in detail one farm in seven: i.e. 50 farms were taken at random, the only elements of selection being that the numbers of farms studied were proportional to the total number of like area, and that these farms were scattered widely over the district.

The total number of animals per 100 acres in this group of small farms was:—

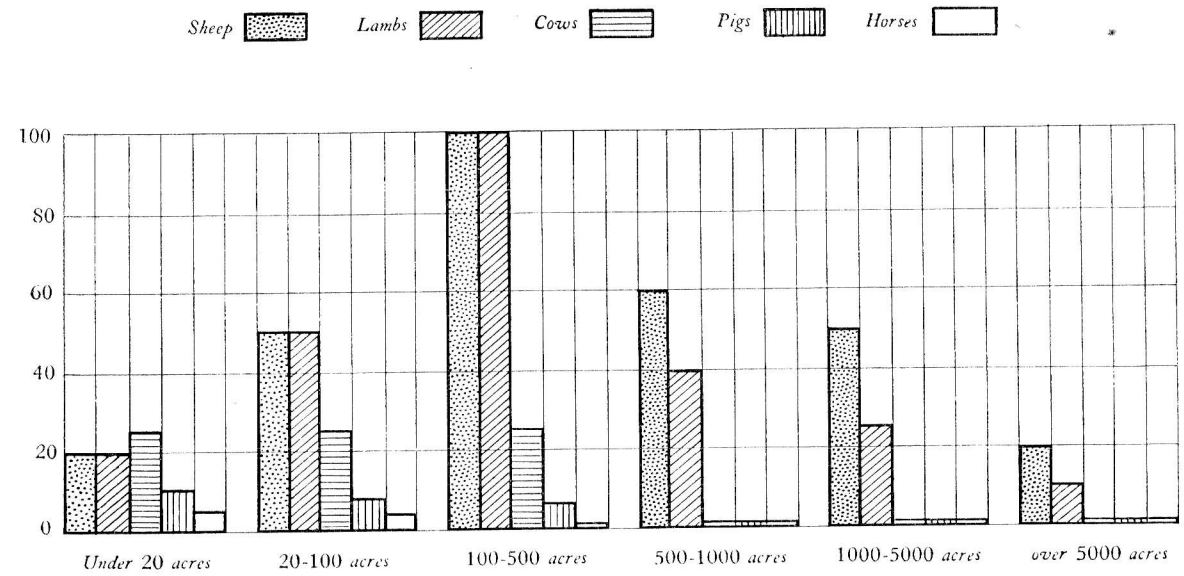
Cows	-	-	-	-	-	-	25
Pigs	-	-	-	-	-	-	10
Sheep	-	-	-	-	-	-	20
Lambs	-	-	-	-	-	-	20
Horses	-	-	-	-	-	-	5

Experienced farmers were of opinion that this result meant that the land was being farmed wastefully, as these small farms consist of some of the best land in the district, land that, farmed intensively, would support 150 sheep and 100 lambs to the 100 acres, or alternatively from 40 to 50 cows. But the occupants of these holdings give less than half their time to farming. Nearly all agreed that if regular work were obtainable they would be better off with less land. The subdivision was made in the early bushfelling days—days of large families and regular work. The old survey maps showed that the twenty-acre farm was the usual subdivision round the sites of the early sawmills. In these days of casual employment the small farm provides milk and butter for the family as well as some pocket money: and there is always a pig for bacon in the winter.

Of the eleven holders of farms selected as a sample of the 75 ranging from 20 to 100 acres each, ten attempted to support themselves entirely from their holdings. As casual work is difficult to get, all are willing to undertake contract ploughing or harvesting when it can be obtained; some add to their incomes by splitting stakes or firewood in the hope of a market. The majority of the dairy-farmers are included in this group and their lot has been a hard one during the period of depressed prices for butterfat. The average area of a farm in this group is 74 acres. As with the previous group the average is 25 cows per 100 acres; but only three horses are required per hundred acres: 8 pigs are fattened and an average hundred acres supports in addition 50 sheep and rears 50 lambs. The number of sheep raised on these small farms depends upon the market prices for wool and mutton. This group represents the most intensive farming in Littledene.

The 101 farms falling within the 100 to 500 acres class occupy an intermediate position between dairying and sheep-farming. A farm of this size is difficult to

*Animals per average 100 acres, according to size of farm.*



manage; it is the type where the farmer's work is 'never done.' A study was made of 14 farms in this group. Six of the fourteen combine dairying and sheep-farming; the other eight mix sheep-farming with the cropping of wheat. In almost every case where dairy cows were kept, there were 25 cows to 100 acres. Land down in wheat averaged 30 bushels to the acre. Where sheep-farming was practised the good average of 100 ewes and 100 lambs to 100 acres was attained. About 10 acres in every 100 in this area were sown in wheat.

Sheep-farming practice in New Zealand calls for the growing of considerable areas of winter and spring feed—usually turnips and rape. In a study of the farms of 500 to 1000 acres it was found that nearly one-eighth of the total land was used for this purpose. To cultivate this area it is necessary to keep a team of horses; tractors are not yet in general use.<sup>2</sup> To feed the horses it is necessary to cultivate for oat-sheaf chaff an area equal to about half that put into sheep feed. As the farmer sees no immediate return from this, he usually puts down a similar area in wheat as a crop from which some profit may be reaped. This is the type of farming practised in all farms studied in the 500–1000 acre group. It is a type of farming that is easily abused by being worked on a short rotational pasture scheme: it tends to discourage the establishment of permanent pasture and only too often brings about serious impoverishment of the soil through too frequent wheat crops. With winter feed, oats for chaff, and wheat for sale, about one quarter of the farm is continually under cultivation, and there is carried on a continual making and breaking of pasture. The farms in this group are at the moment the most productive in Littledene, but there is grave danger of severe soil impoverishment in the near

<sup>2</sup>A count made before going to press showed that the use of tractors is increasing. There were 40 in use in the area under survey. If it is unprofitable to use tractors on farms up to 100 acres, this figure means that among the larger farms there is now one tractor to five holdings.

future. Sheep land in this section carries 140 ewes with their lambs to each 100 acres. Wheat averages 35 bushels to the acre.

In the group of sheep-raising farms of between 1000 and 5000 acres the growing of winter feed and oats is carried on, but on a much smaller area relative to the area of the individual farm. In the six farms studied, only one-sixteenth of the land was cultivated for winter feed. The rest was in native and English grasses. The stock-carrying capacity averages 85 ewes and lambs to 100 acres.

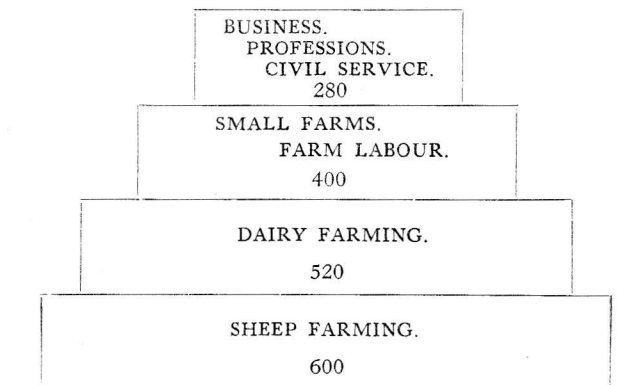
There are only 7 farms of over 5000 acres in Littledene. They are all grazing 'runs' in the upland country and carry about 20 sheep to 100 acres. This country is eminently suited to grazing: the hills are well covered with native grasses and there is ample shelter in the wooded gullies. On the higher levels the introduced wild pigs and deer flourish, but they do not seriously affect the sheep pastures. No attempt is made to fatten sheep on these runs, but in nearly every instance owners rent land on the plains for wintering and fattening. The high-country sheep-runs provide a considerable amount of seasonal work for the small farmers of Littledene.

*How Littledene Earns Its Living.* The above summary shows that there are two classes of farming in Littledene, sheep-farming and dairying, each supplemented by wheat growing. Sheep-farming seems to be the more important because it occupies by far the greater area; but sociology takes more account of people than of acres, of human relationships than of bank balances. By making an actual count of households in farms studied it was possible to arrive at an estimate of the structure of Littledene in the all-important matter of making a living.

There are approximately 600 people, or one third of the total population, living on 145 holdings who draw their livelihood from sheep-farming. As the work is seasonal in

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nature, very little regular hired help is employed on the sheep-farm. The shepherd, employed as such, is a *rara avis*: the owner with his son, for whom there have been of late few openings in the city, can manage all the routine work of the farm. Help at shearing and mustering time can always be obtained from among the small-farm-labouring people in the village. Indeed, there has come



*The Occupational Pyramid : how Littledene earns its living.  
Drawn to scale—showing the numbers supported from each  
type of occupation.*

to be a kind of necessary rapport between the one-horse farmer and the sheep-farmer in the matter of seasonal aid. This arrangement, supported by a great deal of mutual aid among farmers themselves, gets the year's work done.

A count of those occupying small farms of 20 acres and under, those employed as regular farm labourers, as casual workers, and of the unemployed, gave a total of nearly 400. There were 58 registered unemployed in the winter (1935) when this survey was made.<sup>3</sup> The unemployed will

<sup>3</sup>During the winter of 1937 there were 40 registered unemployed drawing a sustenance allowance in place of payment for relief work.

be absorbed into farm work during the months of November, December and January, when shearing, hay-making and harvesting increase the demand for labour. Of the unemployed, nearly all are farm labourers thrown out of work by the slump in produce.

Between the sheep-farmer on the one hand and the farm labourer on the other is the hard-working dairy-farmer. The 117 holdings occupied by dairy-farmers support a population of 520. Work on this type of farm is constant and unremitting and each farm must work out its own method of coping with the daily round. Winter, with fewer cows to be milked, brings some respite, but time thus gained must be given to ploughing, gathering wood, or splitting stakes for home use or for sale.

A fourth class is composed of business and professional people and civil servants. This class with their families gives a total of 280 people—over one-seventh of the whole population surveyed. In this count is included the medical profession, clergy, teachers, bankers, and staffs of the Post Office, County Council and railway. The business section included under this head is increased by a number of survivals from more prosperous days when with the saw-milling industry in full swing Littledene supported a much larger population. The list of business people looks very impressive for a small township; it must be remembered, however, that many of them are old men operating in a very small way. The chief place of business is a branch of a city stock agency which combines the business of farming finance with that of a general emporium.

Littledene also possesses a motor garage, 2 hotels, 3 boarding houses, 3 blacksmiths, 2 threshing mills, 2 carriers, 3 builders, 1 painter and paperhanger, 2 grocers, 2 drapers, 2 bootmakers, 1 tailor, 2 hairdressers, 1 stationer, 2 butchers, 1 milkman, and 3 stock agents. The tendency to-day is for the farmer to do all his business with the firm that finances his stock. It is hardly likely, therefore, that

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the small business can survive the competition of the larger firms backed by city capital.

*Land Tenure and Land Values.* There are two large settlements of Government leasehold land in Littledene; but most of the farm land is freehold. The word freehold signifies little, however, for nearly all farms are encumbered by mortgages. It is impossible to estimate the extent to which land is mortgaged, but the general opinion is that to-day nearly all farms are mortgaged far above their value in relation to present day prices for farm produce. Land values in Littledene soared during the war-time boom and they are slow in coming down to earth again. Government valuations vary from £20 per acre on the better class dairying land to £2 on the plains. Thousands of acres could be bought to-day far below Government valuation; yet many farms carry mortgages on a valuation of £50 per acre!<sup>4</sup>

A farmer of long experience, asked whether any intelligence had been used in the past in determining the price of land, said that almost invariably it had been determined by the price of money rather than by the direct price of produce. He instanced a case of a block of land he himself wanted to buy as it adjoined the lower edge of his back-country farm and would have been useful for wintering sheep. At the time wool was about 18 pence per pound. On a production basis the land was worth £8 per acre: this, he considered at the time, would allow for a drop in the price of wool. But as it would be very convenient for him to acquire this strip of land he offered £10 per acre. The vendor asked £17. Then a speculator with no knowledge of farming, impressed by the greenness of this bit of foot-hill land at a time when most of the country was burnt brown, paid the £17 asked. Within a few months he sold out for £21 per acre. These transactions

<sup>4</sup>Many of these mortgages have now been reduced under the terms of *The Mortgagors and Lessees Rehabilitation Act*, 1936. See below, p. 17.

had the effect of putting a false value on neighbouring land. 'So-and-so paid £21 for that bit of one-sheep-to-the-acre land; this bit with more water and a sheep-and-a-half last year must be worth £30.' And even if 'this bit' did not change hands, it probably became encumbered with a fresh mortgage to be sunk in so-called improvements. To-day there are no illusions about the real value of all this land. A farmer on the verge of bankruptcy said recently that he had bought his farm believing that there was a world shortage of wool and that it would rise in price to 7/6 per lb.! Dozens of stories could be told of a similar nature: stories of plenty of money, people clamouring for rural investments, stock and station agents offering unlimited credit at ruinous rates of interest.

The growth of the mortgage system in New Zealand has created an extensive absentee-partnership in the business of farming. It is probable that the farm population of Littledene is struggling to support from its earnings a city population of equal size. The necessary readjustments between mortgagor and mortgagee have been slow, painful, and extremely worrying to the farmers. During the past five or six years the farmers of Littledene have had their minds not so much on the effective production of wool and butter, but upon the necessity of scraping money together in any way possible to meet interest due. Perhaps because of this necessity farmers, more than any other class of producers, are prone to change over to a new type of production with every change of market; this has been shown by the increasing number of dairy-farmers who have kept sheep since the improvement in wool prices. Such speculative variation in farming in the wake of the market has characterised the past fifteen years, since the post-war depression set in. But those farmers who have stuck to their specialty and improved their methods have made their financial position so sound that interest payments have not been a source of worry to them.

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*Farm Finance.* The farm mortgagee arrangement is not the only factor to be considered in farm finance. Given the farmer and the land and the mortgage, there remain the questions of stock, seed, manure, wages, insurance and all the other accessories to farm production. It is here that the stock agency comes in. This is a joint stock company whose business is to sell credit to farmers on the security of stock and crops—usually up to two-thirds of their estimated value. The past twenty or thirty years have seen a great extension of the function of these firms. The principal one operating in Littledene provides practically everything the farmer needs—credit, implements, petrol, manures, footwear, clothing and groceries. It arranges his credit, sells his stock in the open market, keeps his accounts, pays his interest, his taxes and his wages and takes its commission from what is left.

The stock agency has thus come to wield a very great power in the rural community. The farmer's fairy god-mother in the days of godmothers, the stock agency is now the kindly but stern parent with the 'this hurts me more than it hurts you' attitude. The depression caught many farmers with their stock agency account swelled beyond hope of liquidation. With credit suddenly stopped the farmer was in a parlous state. There were stormy times of readjustment to the new order. There were some few foreclosures in Littledene, but it soon became apparent that the best policy for all concerned was one of keeping the farmer on his land. Over and over again the mortgagee found that he was driving out an experienced farmer and putting in his place a man whose only qualification was a more favourable bank balance.

One instance of many such must suffice. A tolerably good farmer had been struggling to pay his way on a rented farm at 13s. 6d. per acre. As soon as prices fell he realised that his position was hopeless. He made a careful estimate of his assets and found that he could keep going

and pay up his overdraft with the stock agency if his rent were reduced to 10s. per acre. It was in the early days of the slump, the offer was rejected, the man's assets were sold up and he left the farm penniless. The farm was then let to a man who already had more land than he could farm effectively. Under his regime the farm has deteriorated almost beyond recovery and the rent has been reduced from time to time until it now stands at 7s. per acre.

*Legislation to Help the Farmer.* Since the beginning of the depression a series of Acts of Parliament has succeeded in making the farmer's position more tenable. The first important move was the fixing of the rate of exchange on London. The Government took control of exchange, which in normal times acts as a regulator between imports and exports, and pegged it at approximately 125 per cent on London. In other words, the English pound bore a fixed ratio to the New Zealand pound of 125 to 100. The immediate results were a check on imports and a keener market for wool and dairy produce, which rose slightly in terms of New Zealand currency. The control of exchange, which still remains fixed, made little appreciable difference to the individual farmer although it probably averted a financial catastrophe.

Of more immediate importance to the individual were the Mortgagees Relief Act of 1931 and its various extensions up to the final Act of 1934-35. In brief, the various acts provided for obligatory extension of the currency of mortgages, for a stay of proceedings in case of foreclosures, for relief of lessees, for reduction of rent and for remission of arrears of rent and interest. Few cases in Littledene were taken to the Supreme Court for adjustment, but the passing of the Acts brought about a new triangular relationship of the mortgagor, mortgagee and stock agency. A farmer in debt to his mortgagee and the stock agency prepared

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a careful budget for a year's working. The budget was considered by the other contracting parties, and, if approved, the stock agent opened a new account for one year. The farmer was allowed reasonable living expenses and at the end of the year any surplus was divided *pro rata* between the stock agency and the mortgagee for reduction of the previous account. Under this system of finance it was possible to make some headway, but the farmer's budget was cut to the barest necessities; all the things that lent some colour to existence had to go. The majority of farmers found it impossible to buy books or take even the briefest of holidays. One of the results of this curtailment was an increased interest in local organisation—in amateur drama, the travelling library, and local meetings of the Workers' Educational Association.

The Acts of 1931 to 1935 were in the nature of emergency measures only; in 1936 they were replaced by the Mortgagors and Lessees Rehabilitation Act. As far as the farmer was concerned the Act was designed to retain him on the land, to adjust his debts to a reasonable level, and to make certain that the rent of a leasehold property did not exceed a rental based on the productiveness of the land in question. To give effect to the Act, rehabilitation commissions were set up and decisions, which became binding, were based on the basic value of the land and its earning capacity in the past. In Littledene there were many voluntary adjustments after the new Act came into force, and the old triangular agreements between mortgagee, mortgagor and stock agency largely were replaced by simple two-party arrangements with the stock firm. Another factor of importance was the bold experiment of the Labour Government early in 1936 of guaranteeing the price of dairy produce. In brief, the government bought and marketed in London the total dairy produce of the country, paying to the farmer a fixed price for his product.

In this way the government smoothed out market fluctuations by paying prices based on the quotations of a reasonable period of years.

This move on the part of the government is being reflected in Littledene although dairying is not the main branch of farming in the district. Price fixing has made it possible for the small farmer to place a correct value on his holding and to plan accordingly. This new sense of security also comes at a time when prices for farm by-products such as fat, pelts and eggs are rising. The general outlook, therefore, is one of optimism. It is difficult at the moment, however, to forecast the effect this will have on the social life of the district.

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## CHAPTER II

### HOMES AND HOMEMAKERS

ON the close economic warp outlined above, Littledene weaves the tapestry of its life. It is not very colourful or varied in form, but its design is worth more than a passing glance. It is in the homes rather than in the fields that its essential pattern is woven.

In rural New Zealand, houses consist of one storey only. They are built of wood, roofed with corrugated iron, and painted in various buff or cream-coloured shades with red, brown or green facings. Brick, stone and thatch, so common in the English country-side, are unknown. The life of a wooden house of the type built in the early days is about fifty years: it follows that the old farmhouses of Littledene are falling into decay. In many of them the wooden piles that form their foundations have sunk and the floors are tilted and worn with the footsteps of half a century. The wood-borer, which came from England as an uninvited guest in the boxes and furniture of the early settlers, plays havoc with the fabric of these houses and fills the air of many of them with yellow wood-dust.

But these old farmhouses are hardly perceptible to the passer-by, as they are lost to view among surrounding trees. Trees introduced from England grow very fast in New Zealand, and the early settlers, used to the English rate of growth, planted them close to their houses. Pines and cypress predominate in farm plantations. The

common *pinus radiata* comes to maturity in about twenty-five years; it provides abundant shelter and fire-wood: *cupressus macrocarpa* is equally useful for shelter, at the same time growing timber for fencing-posts. Oaks, elms and sycamores are common. The rapid rate of growth of English trees may be estimated from the fact that one farmhouse in Littledene has its dining-room furniture made from oaks grown from acorns brought from England fifty years ago. This quick-growth timber is, of course, soft and open in the grain; it is in no way comparable with the slower growing English timber. The native trees are of very slow growth, however, and the building timber cut from them is of the best quality.

The average number of persons per household is 4.3, and the average number of rooms in the houses studied is five; all the houses are habitable and neat—more than half are old and uncomfortable. Among the labouring people and small farmers, bathrooms are rare—only one house in five possessing one. Hot water services and wash-houses with water laid on are equally rare. The rain-water tank and the old-fashioned pump in the back-yard are still common. During the post-war boom, new and more modern houses began to replace, on the larger farms, the old ones built fifty or sixty years ago.

Although the number of rooms in the older houses is ample, the tendency to make the kitchen serve the purpose of a living-room causes the houses to seem crowded. The 'front-room' with its formal furniture, palm-stand and ornaments is used on festive occasions only, and the best bedroom is occupied only by a rare guest. It is the need for warmth rather than any other factor that makes the kitchen become the living-room. There must be a fire in the kitchen; there is no central heating; extra fires cost money and 'make work'; father is too tired at the end of the day to change his working clothes and boots in order to go into the 'front room';

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it is more convenient to serve meals in the place where they are cooked. So the family 'lives' in the kitchen.

The older small farmhouses are built with two front rooms on each side of a passage which leads from the front door to a 'lean-to' kitchen built at the back. The 'front-room' and the best bedroom are on either hand on entering the front door: the two used bedrooms are behind them. The kitchen, long and narrow, with walls of painted wood, its windows heavily curtained, its floor covered with pattern-worn linoleum, is furnished with a large table scrubbed white and chairs mostly rickety and awry. The stove, in the darkest corner, requires the suppleness of a contortionist to get a glimpse of the oven. The dresser holds the crockery above, the cakes and other quick-afternoon-tea edibles below. Behind the door are two hooks for hanging coats and hats; on the wall near by, a rack for newspapers and a shelf for schoolbooks. Bacon, well-cured and smoked, hangs from the ceiling.

The kitchen is the farmer's retreat from the battle with forces over which he has no control. It is his little haven of security: the window is close curtained, the wind and the rain shut out. Here are food and warmth, the memory of the last meal and the smell of the next one cooking. Here in the evening father reads the paper, mother makes and mends, the children pore over their lesson books. It is a thrifty community and old clothes are refashioned for the children from the garments of their elders. One hard-working woman, asked what she would do with an extra hour's leisure, said she would make more clothes for the children, another that she would spend it in gardening.

In the larger farm houses the dining-room has taken the place of the kitchen as the living-room for the family; but, except for the fact that it is more roomy, it is of much the same character as the kitchen in the small farm.

The newer houses are fresher, cleaner and brighter, but rooms are not appreciably larger. The depression has tended to consolidate home life and much less time is spent at the Workingmen's Club, the cinema and social evenings. To-day the radio serves in the direction of keeping the family together, but it adds noise and confusion to the family living-room. There are nearly 100 radio receiving sets spread among Littledene's 1,800 people: in the back country they are helping to make farm life less isolated.<sup>1</sup>

Electricity penetrated as far as Littledene eight years ago and all the houses of the township and the nearer farms now have electric light. Very few homes use electricity for cooking or water heating. Labour-saving devices in the homes are rare; not one home in fifty studied had a vacuum cleaner. Two-thirds of the people are connected with the telephone service, the local exchange being open daily from 6 a.m. to midnight. In no instance among those interviewed had the depression caused the surrender of the telephone. 'We don't go out much, and the telephone keeps us in touch with the neighbours' was a frequent remark.

*Cooking.* Visitors from abroad have commented on the number of meals New Zealanders eat. Meat is served three times a day in many farm homes: morning tea at 10.30 and afternoon tea at 3.30 often assume the proportions of meals. A novelist recently raised a storm of protest by referring to those 'amazing women' who . . . 'did the washing, the ironing, the cooking, the mending, the house-keeping, the shopping, the gardening, and they looked after their husbands and children. In addition, they embroidered the curtains, the cushions, the

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<sup>1</sup>The most popular items on the radio appear to be the news items and talks. A survey showed that few people have yet formed the habit of listening to the better type of music. 'I like something lively,' said a farmer; 'I can't stand all that stuff in D minor.'

napkins, the duchesse sets, the tablecloths, and even the oven-cloths; but they seldom embroidered their under-clothing. Every house had its tea-trolley, two perambulating shelves on which the housewife loaded six or more varieties of cakes of her own baking, which convention compelled her to offer to her guests at supper, afternoon or morning tea—a species of tea party at which these incredible women found time to congregate at eleven o'clock in the morning.<sup>2</sup> These are the women of Littledene. Go into their homes, and tea appears as if by magic. But the morning and afternoon tea habit is not by any means an adornment to the day. It grew out of pioneering times when to offer refreshment was to be a real friend. The habit is now firmly fixed; and morning tea is not entirely superfluous on the farm. It must be remembered that the day begins early and more often than not breakfast is over by seven o'clock. There follows much vigorous work, especially on the dairy-farm. If the milking is done before breakfast, there is the cream-separating to follow—then the washing of cans, feeding of pigs, calves, and poultry, before the ploughing and sowing, hay-making or what-not can begin. It is a long time till dinner time: mid-morning brings the need of morning tea.

The cooking for morning and afternoon teas is elaborate in the extreme: it out-Beetons Mrs. Beeton! Five or six kinds of cake are not uncommon. And wherever people meet together, teas and suppers appear. It is not possible for a play-reading group to meet without supper getting into it sooner or later, and if supper is restricted to tea and a biscuit in the earlier meetings, the spirit of Mrs. Beeton takes charge before the end of the session.

In Littledene baking is an art. Art may be defined roughly as any human activity raised to its highest

<sup>2</sup>Margaret Jepson, *Via Panama*. London, 1934.

significance. The toil and moil of the farm leaves little time for aesthetic appreciation of arts divorced from the daily round. So the farmer breeds a pedigree cow or pig; his wife gets her modicum of self-expression from her cooking. The materials are at hand: art grows from its environment. It is impossible to take one sunset, some skill, and abundant leisure to make a picture. The farm wife takes a pint of cream, six eggs and the spur of the moment while the meat and potatoes are cooking—and lo!—a cream-sponge-cake six inches high, with two inches of whipped cream in its depths. The cookery section of the Littledene Agricultural and Pastoral Show is like a confectioner's heaven. And experts agree that the Cookery Book produced by the Women's Division of the New Zealand Farmers' Union would do credit to a Paris chef.

*Pictorial Art.* Pictorial art is almost non-existent. Wall-papers are usually florid—the dreary pictures a relief from the walls' incessant flowering. Pictures are divided into two classes, 'hand-painted' and others. Hand-painted pictures, no matter how crude, are looked upon as being of much greater value than prints. Of the latter, the old-fashioned steel engraving is held in some veneration, but the usual picture is the tradesman's almanac that seemed 'worth a frame.' Even those who buy pictures look upon them as 'garniture and household-stuff.' A picture often encountered is a black and white depicting two horses frightened by lightning. *The Monarch of the Glen* and *Highland Cattle, Our Boy, Our Girl*, and *Wedded* were also noted. Vague, dark, misty trees with wide oak frames are popular. A lady living in Littledene who works in oils and is a regular exhibitor of pictures takes some few pupils. Interviewed, she said that very few are really interested in art. Her pupils prefer copying to working from nature; few are

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interested in looking at pictures. One of her old pupils who acquired some technical ability stated when asked about her painting that she was not painting any more as she now had all the pictures she wanted!

*Music.* The possessive attitude to music is also the rule. The only teacher of music said that the highest ambition of parents sending children to be taught the elements of music was that they should be able to play for local concerts and dances. None ever began learning with the aim of understanding and interpreting great music. People will not pay more than £1 1s. for a term's tuition of 13 lessons. In her opinion the depression and the coming of the radio have displaced the practice of music in the home.

*Gardening.* Every home visited had its garden—mostly cared for by the womenfolk. 'The men are too busy to bother with vegetables, but the garden is half our living,' said one woman. Fruit is not grown to any great extent, as the late frosts endanger the early buds and the hot north-west winds in summer tend to wither the fruit as it is setting.

*Books.* Books are a rarity in most of the homes visited—many of the homes of labouring people having nothing but the children's schoolbooks. Where books were found, they were mostly old, defunct fiction, dreary school and Sunday-school prizes. In many homes where books had been bought, the result had been unfortunate. It is a strange thing that the better class booksellers have never entered into competition with drapers and the like for the placing of their wares in the country. When a traveller calls with a book it is likely to be some highly priced gaily-bound thing of little use to the farmer. In the larger farm homes these Sybilline 'books' were found. Some years ago a traveller sold in Littledene eighty copies of a so-called medical book at three guineas each. This

book is not read, but as one farmer said, 'it is always there if you want it.' Books on religious subjects, dictionaries and self-educators are found unread. These books do much harm as they prevent the type of people who buy them from finding that books can be a vital factor in life. The institution of the travelling library is doing much to counteract this attitude to books in the farm home. In fully half the homes visited library books were being read, but few were acquiring books of their own.

*The Commercial Traveller.* The commercial traveller, especially the representative of the city drapery firm, is a welcome figure in the farmstead even if there is little money to spend. During times of depression, when the farmer's wife does not visit the city once in a twelve-month, the traveller is doubly welcome. Three commercial travellers interviewed said that their country sales had actually increased of late owing to the less frequent visits of farm folk to the city. But for all that, household stocks are getting low. Sheets and blankets are wearing out and there is no money to replace them. It is difficult to get overcoats and winter boots for the children. 'We have plenty of food,' said one woman in 1935, 'and we can keep the children tidy. But it won't last much longer. I could spend £50 in replacing blankets, etc., without its being seen. I have renewed nothing for the past five years. And my own clothes and my husband's are almost completely worn out.' This position is general: it is one of the many paradoxes of the times that the producers of raw materials share so little in the finished product.

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### CHAPTER III

## WORK AND LEISURE

### THE HABIT OF WORK

THE people of Littledene believe in work. This is a heritage from pioneering days when the most urgent need of the community was labour, and the most admired virtue was a willingness to work. The genial climate of New Zealand made it possible to graze cattle and sheep and work teams of horses throughout the year. The actual farm work could be continued over twelve months instead of over seven or eight as was the case in the Old Land. The farmer thus spread the work over the year and employed fewer helpers: he capitalized the climate and dropped his blood for drachmas.

In the early days there was no alternative: farm labour was scarce in pioneering times and the gold rushes of the early sixties, which drew labour away to the diggings, did not improve matters. The long working day has now become a habit and the habit a virtue. All the farmers interviewed admitted that they needed more help on their farms, but nearly everyone thought that more leisure as a general rule would be a bad thing. The farmer does not express himself very clearly but the line of his thinking on the vexed subject of work and leisure is somewhat as follows. In the old days hard work meant prosperity; that

was a matter of simple experience and there were copy-book maxims a-plenty to prove it. The depression with its lack of money is due to slackness somewhere—to the modern laziness of the people generally, if not in the country, then in the town, if not among the lowly, then among those in high places, if not in New Zealand, then in Europe where the markets are. To very few does the possibility occur that the depression may be the logical outcome of strenuous days and mechanical efficiency carried to the paradoxical end of all things strained to breaking point.

The only way out of the depression, according to the Littledene farmer, is more work. So the small farmer adds to his day's work by splitting wood or stakes to sell for cash, the dairy-farmer adds to his over-burdened year by keeping a few sheep. The sheep-farmer grows some extra wheat—and so it goes on—each one trying to solve his individual problem by further reducing prices paid to his neighbour.

*The Yearly Rhythm of Work.* The sheep-farmer's year begins in August with lambing. On the plains the lambs are early and require daily attention from the farmer-owner: on the hills lambs are later—the end of September or the beginning of October being the usual time. In hill country ewes are not disturbed, the general opinion being that they are better left alone. But every change of weather at lambing time means constant vigilance—work night and day for all the family. The farmer's wife finds that the feeding of orphaned lambs occupies much of her time at this stage. In November on the hill lands comes the mustering for tailing. It is the hardest and most complete muster of the year and always calls for extra musterers drawn from the small-farmer section of the community. The lambs are counted and tailed and on the tally is based the estimate for the year's working.

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December brings another muster followed by shearing. In Littledene, shearers are small farmers living in the district. The largest farms employ six shearers. Machines are little used: they are difficult to keep in order and shear too close for hill sheep. Work goes on from 5 a.m. to 5 p.m.; a good man can put through 150 sheep per day, although the average is about 80. The larger farms employ a cook at shearing times, but on the smaller holdings the burden of cooking falls on the farmer's wife. After shearing, the sheep are turned out on the hills and not disturbed until March. If there is no cropping done on the farm, the months of January and February bring some little respite, but, on all but the purely pastoral runs, the harvesting of grain crops with harvesters drawn from the small farms occupies these months to the full.

In March comes the muster to take the lambs from the ewes. Again a full quota of musterers is required with a few extra men to assist with the drafting. Ewe lambs for flock purposes are selected and older sheep are culled out. Wether lambs are usually sold in the open market to be fattened by the small farmer with a few acres of rape or other green feed. In May and June the sheep are again put back on the hills and are not disturbed until snow threatens and then they are brought down to lower levels. On farms where turnips are grown the shepherd is occupied with fencing and grubbing turnips—or with repairing fences on the hills when the weather permits.

The year's work on the smaller sheep-cropping farm centres in the five- or six-horse team. The team is working most of the year and this determines a regular daily rhythm of work that cannot be broken. At 5.30 a.m. the feeding of the team commences so that the actual work of cultivation may begin at 8. The day is a long one. It is the lot of the teamster to be out on the land until dusk and then the feeding of the team detains him until 9 p.m.

		Sheep farming	Cropping	Dairying	Women's work
Spring	August	Lambing	Spring ploughing.	Milking house cows	Tending orphan lambs, etc.
	September		Spring sowing wheat.		
	October		Drilling oats for green feed		Work for Xmas bazaars
Summer	November	Mustering for tailing	Drilling rape, turnips and grass seed	Daily milking of whole dairy herd	Lunches for musterers
	December	Mustering and shearing			
	January		Wheat and oat harvest		Women often attend to daily separating, and on some farms butter-making
Autumn	February	Ploughing			
	March	Weaning. Ewe and lamb fairs	Drilling autumn oats and wheat		
	April				
Winter	May	Winter muster.	Winter ploughing as weather permits	Milking house cows	Period of most leisure; adult classes, dances, card parties, etc.
	June	Bring sheep to lower levels			
	July				

The Yearly Round of Work on the Farms of Littledene

The yearly rhythm is complicated by the addition of agriculture to pastoral sheep-farming. Lambing begins in August and September. While the large run-holder may delay the lambing season until after the equinoctial rains of the latter end of September, the small farmer with higher priced land must endeavour to catch the better prices of the early market. Early lambs mean greater vigilance and constant attention on his part, and during the whole of the lambing season cultivation of the land must go on. Very often the ewes are brought into a paddock adjoining one that is being ploughed so that the farmer-owner-shepherd-teamster may have his eye on the sheep and his hand on the plough. As soon as lambing is over, oats for green feed is drilled in and land is prepared for turnips and rape which are sown in December. As on the larger farms, tailing takes place in November and shearing in December. In January comes the wheat harvest. Thirteen out of twenty farms studied, with an area of 100 to 1000 acres, grew some wheat as a cash crop.

But harvest time brings little respite from the year's toil. Immediately the land must be worked for the autumn sowings of wheat and oats. This occupies the farmer's time until the end of April. Ploughing goes on throughout the winter months, whenever weather permits, in preparation for the spring sowings of green feed and the later sowings of turnips and rape. Such is the yearly rhythm on the sheep-cropping farm. When, as is often the case, dairying is added, the dance of life becomes frenzied and there is little leisure. There is not much specialisation in Littledene; it is a land of mixed farming with mixed blessings in return.

The small dairy farm is, of course, dominated by the twice-daily milking. The busiest milking season extends from the beginning of October until the end of April; but in nearly every instance studied the farmer milks part of his herd through the winter for the sake of the better

winter prices for butter fat. Some cropping is necessary on the dairy farm and the single-furrow plough and the two-horse team are common. Then there are a few sheep and a few acres of wheat. Every dairy farmer owns a separator, and the cream is collected three times a week by one or other of the factories in the city.

*Leisure.* When the farmer is asked how long he works, his reply is invariably 'From daylight till dark.' This is the usual formula—a rationalisation that is not strictly true; but the early dark of the winter months certainly brings greater opportunities for leisure. From the end of March until the beginning of August is the best time for community recreation and education. In the matter of leisure the run-holder who is able to pay a shepherd is in a more fortunate position than the other farmers. Except for periods of mustering and shearing he is not tied to a regular routine. Yet he is the last person to admit that he has any leisure at all. This is probably due to the fact that he has not thought about using leisure profitably. There are so many circumstances in farming over which man has no control—the weather and the markets, the bankers and the mortgagees—that he has never learned to plan ahead, to work to schedule and to drop the day's work when it is over. His mind is always on it: he makes little conversation other than that concerning farming and prices. When he leaves the farm to go to a sale, or to drop in for an hour at the club, it is to compare notes with his fellow farmers and to talk round the same old theme. A sheep-farmer who solemnly declared that he had no leisure at all admitted that he spent at least one day a week at the market although he bought and sold only once or twice a year. There are some who regularly attend two markets every week. Over ninety per cent of the farmers attending the fortnightly market in Littledene are sheep-farmers. The man with the mixed small farm has little time for sales and does not attend unless he has

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something to sell or is anxious to buy. The sheep-farmer declares that attendance at sales is part of his business—that it is necessary to keep in touch with the market. The fact is that in a sheep-farming community there is much unorganised co-operation between the different types of farms. Not only does the large run-holder depend upon the small farmer for seasonal aid, he also depends upon the middleman farmer as a market for the sheep he cannot fatten. Store sheep from the high country are continually passing through the market to the more favourable foothill lands.

The big sheep fairs are held in March and April. Then the fat lambs are sold for export and the farms are restocked with ewes. The other fortnightly sales during the year supply the local and city markets with mutton, but a large proportion of the sheep in these sales are merely changing homes, altering the entries in the ledger at the Littledene branch of the Bank of New Zealand and building up the commission account of the stock auctioneer. To lean over the pens contemplating these peripatetic sheep and chuckling at the perennial witticisms of the auctioneer—then to spend an hour at the Workingmen's Club before going home—this is the 'day out' of the sheep-farmer. The dairy-farmer finds that to attend a market means such a disorganisation of the routine work of the farm that it must not occur too often. 'Twice or three times a year' was the usual estimate of the dairy-farmer.

Employees on the dairying-cropping type of farm have very little leisure. The day's work lasts from 5.30 a.m. until 9 p.m. when the feeding of the team is over for the day. A teamster on a 300 acre farm said, 'There is little real leisure on a place like this. I get Sundays off but then I have to feed the horses night and morning and the few hours in the middle of the day are spent in washing clothes, mending, etc. On Sunday I shave. There is no

time to shave on the other days. It is impossible to take part in games: even if you manage to get Saturday afternoon off it is necessary to be back on the place by 4 p.m. in the winter. We are entitled to holidays on Labour Day, New Year's Day, Good Friday, Easter Monday, Anzac Day, the King's Birthday and Christmas Day. But Christmas Day and Good Friday are the only ones a man is sure of getting. The others are given under protest.'

Farm labourers, and, in these days, sons of farmers find it next to impossible to take part in any organised sport. A farmer would never think of stopping his team on a Saturday afternoon because his son or his teamster wished to play football or tennis. About 70 per cent of the football players in Littledene are sons and employees of farmers—but this imposing percentage amounts to fewer than a score of players. And the majority of these get a Saturday half-holiday in the winter but not in the summer.

There is, of course, no escape from the routine work of Sunday. Farmers are as a class strict in the matter of Sunday observance. This means that no team-work, harvesting, shearing, etc., is done. Mustering and droving are permitted only when it is unavoidable. Sunday observance appears to mean going to Church, if possible, once on Sunday and doing nothing at all during the few remaining hours in the middle of the day. Games of any sort on Sunday are looked upon with horror. The few residents who play a game of golf on a tiny six-hole course on Sundays are looked upon as being almost beyond the pale of civilisation. In an endeavour to provide games, more especially for the young people on farms, the tennis club recently approached the Littledene Domain Board for permission to play tennis on Sunday afternoons at a time that would not coincide with the services of any Church. They further promised that no matches or

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competitions of any kind would be played. The request was refused by the Board by three votes to two. The three who voted against it were farmers; the minority were business men.<sup>1</sup>

Labour-saving machinery has not entered to any extent into Littledene. There are for instance only forty tractors in the whole area, and the tendency seems to be towards a return to the six-horse team. A farmer who sold his tractor said that he could not sell the oats he grew last season and the tractor wouldn't work on them! He bought the tractor only because the boys liked tinkering about with machinery, and they were too lazy nowadays to get up early enough in the morning to feed a team properly. And in the evening it was the same old story: they wanted to be off to a dance or social instead of staying at home to feed horses. Milking machines are rare. The general opinion is that they do not save time and that they tend to produce mammitis in the cows. Shearing machines are equally unpopular for reasons that have been mentioned.

But Littledene is not giving up its motor cars. Last year 286 motor vehicles were registered and of this number 184 were cars. This is an increase over the previous year and means that one family in two possesses a car. Some of these cars are old and decrepit, but they all go. Farmers were reluctant to admit that they used their cars for pleasure, but it was found on pursuing the matter further that they were used far more for pleasure than for business. A farmer who was horrified at the idea of Sunday afternoon games and determined never to let them take place in Littledene, no matter what was done in the

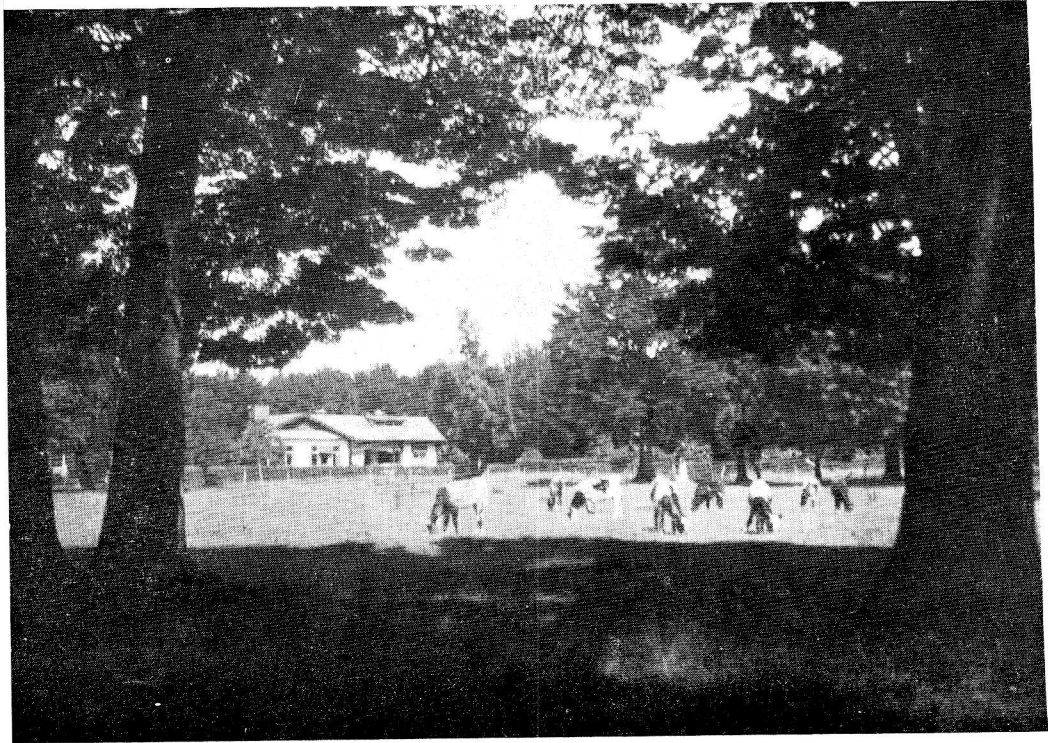
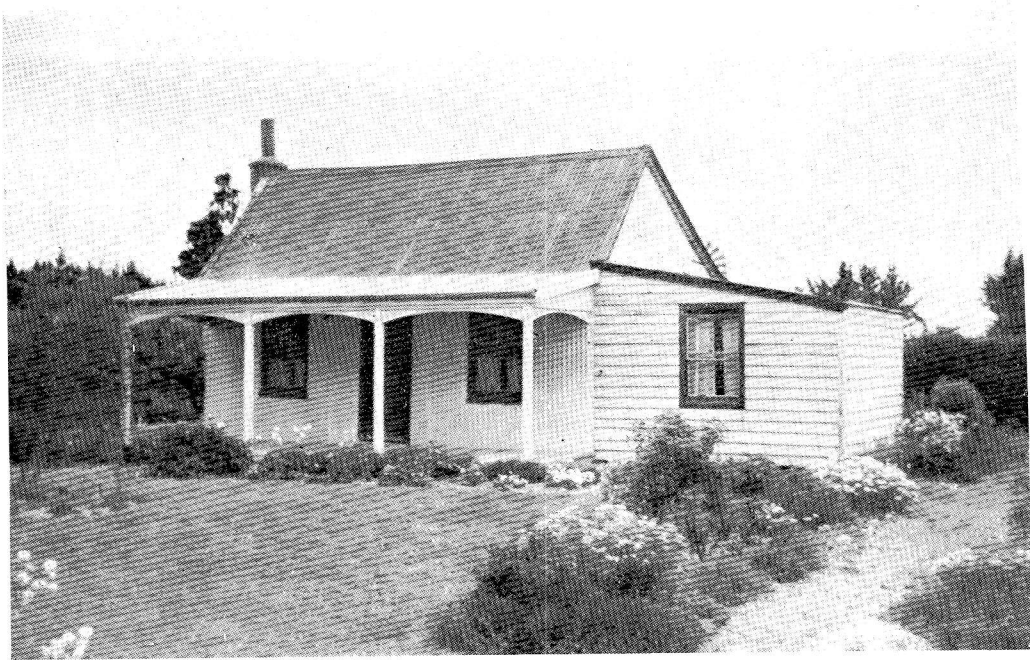
<sup>1</sup>In the matter of Sunday observance Littledene is extremely orthodox. Compare with *Middletown*, pp. 340-3. In connection with tennis, two hundred residents signed a petition asking the Domain Board not to allow any Sunday games. 'We cannot expect the continuance of God's blessing on a town that permits Sunday games,' was part of the heading of the petition. Sunday entertainments are unknown and one hears complaints about the nature of music broadcast on Sundays. 'It should be confined to *sacred* music,' is a frequent comment.

world outside, saw nothing wrong in making Sunday pleasure trips in his car. Ideas and habits change slowly in the country unless they are attached to something concrete. The sellers of cars, radios, electric light and telephones can revolutionise the work and play of a community in a way that the philosopher with his reasoning can never hope to rival.

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One of the earliest farm-houses in Littledene. The 'lean-to' bedroom at the right was added later. The verandah is 'modern.' There has been some 'restoration' by placing a layer of corrugated iron over the weather-boards of the front wall. The trees that once surrounded this house have been cut down.

New farm-house in native bush country.

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#### CHAPTER IV

#### SOCIAL ORGANISATION

THE social history of Littledene illustrates clearly the way that human groupings come into being in new lands. In the very early days the isolation of the little Antipodean settlement brought its members close together and new groupings were born almost daily. It must not be thought that all these early organisations necessarily grew out of the special needs of the community as a community. The people who came to Littledene brought with them the memories of their associations with their fellows on the other side of the world; there was a heartache in these memories which could be eased only by planting the institutions of the old land in the heart of the new settlement.

Those who succeeded in founding these early groupings created a mental atmosphere in which the like-minded could live; but, because the settlers were few and varied in their individual needs, many a new association was doomed to an early death. The social history of Littledene is punctuated with the tombs of these ventures. A community comes to know its needs, not by taking thought, but by a process of selection that goes on among its organisations as among its individuals: each organisation is the answer to the need of the individual for the two or three gathered together.

The survivals of the process of social organisation

are many and varied;<sup>1</sup> but the working out of something that is not imitative—something that is characteristic of rural life in New Zealand—has yet to be achieved. Its beginnings only may be detected.

*The Organisation of Welfare.* The first experiment in organised welfare began in 1864 with the establishment of a Road Board. A meeting of landholders was held and nominations were asked for. As each name was called, the people present voted by a show of hands and the five receiving most votes were duly elected. The Road Board compiled a Ratepayers' Roll and assessed the value of land for rating. There were then only 5000 acres of rateable land; open land was valued at 4s. per acre, fenced land 5s., bush land 6s., and cultivated land 7s. The rate struck was 6d. to 9d. per acre and the total collected in the first year was £135. To-day the largest county in Littledene collects in rates nearly £4000 per annum from an area of 160,000 acres.

In 1912 the Road Board, after nearly 50 years of activity, was succeeded by the County Council. The Council, which consists of seven members, is elected triennially. The franchise is on a property basis, viz.:—value under £1000—one vote; not exceeding £2000—two votes; over £2000—three votes. All the members of the present council with one exception are farmers or retired farmers and their chief duty lies in maintaining roads and water races. The general rate levied to-day is  $\frac{3}{8}$ d. in the £, one of the lowest rates in New Zealand.

*Lodges.* The risk to life and limb in the early sawmilling days caused benefit lodges to come into being at an early date. An Oddfellows' Lodge was established in 1868 and a second one in 1876. In addition to these two lodges there are now an Orange Lodge and a Masonic Lodge.

<sup>1</sup>See Appendix.

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The total membership of these lodges is 350, representing 75% of the adult male population of Littledene.

*Hospital.* The public hospital was opened fifteen years ago. It is controlled by the City Hospital Board and a rate of  $\frac{1}{4}$ d. in the £ provided £1,300 last year towards its maintenance. Two nurses are employed, handling only maternity cases and minor surgical work, under the supervision of the local medical practitioner. For some years the hospital was not popular as a maternity home. The people disliked the rules about visiting, and mothers preferred the cottage home where they could see all their friends as soon as the baby was born. But the times are changing, and last year two-thirds of the babies born in Littledene entered into the life of the village by way of the public hospital. In connection with the hospital there is a Ladies' Visiting Committee, which provides many comforts not usually associated with a public institution.

*Rest Room.* Then there is the Ladies' Rest Room, which was built by public subscription. It is situated near the park and saleyards, and here the Infant Welfare Nurse is in attendance every Thursday. It has proved to be a boon to mothers on market days.

*Farmers' Union.* The Farmers' Union has a large membership but a poor attendance at meetings. Its activities lie mostly in the direction of supporting the policy of the central body with which it is affiliated. The Agricultural and Pastoral Association is an off-shoot of the Littledene branch of the Farmers' Union. Through its efforts the township has an annual show covering every side of rural life. The showgrounds are well supplied with suitable buildings—and the grounds are leased to the golf club during the winter months. Interest in the show is maintained at a high level and no doubt it helps to raise the standard of farming. In its best years the entries in the show have exceeded 1,500.

*Benevolent and Improvement League.* In the matter of welfare Littledene possesses one organisation that is probably unique—the Benevolent and Improvement League. During the world war a patriotic committee was formed, one of its objects being to raise funds for the Red Cross and other war charities. To do this the committee purchased a moving-picture plant and gave weekly entertainments in a hall which was at the time privately owned. The committee was in being for six years and when the time came to disband, it was felt that peace called for social service just as urgently as did war. The committee was re-formed as the Littledene Benevolent and Improvement League, its object being to raise funds for benevolence in, and improvement of, the community in general. Its membership is limited to 24—and when a vacancy occurs a new member is elected by the remaining members. This method has proved to be very satisfactory; only men animated by the idea of social service are elected. The interest of the members is keen. During the past year there have never been more than three absences from the monthly meeting of the League.

One of the League's first acts was to purchase a privately owned hall for £400 and to present it to the district. It then promoted a scheme by which over £1000 was raised to be applied to the building of a new Town Hall. When the new hall was built, the League purchased an up-to-date talking-picture plant and has continued its weekly entertainment. The sub-committee in charge of programmes has been able to make very good contracts for pictures, so that the entertainment is of a high order. Since the purchase of the talking-picture plant, the net annual return has been approximately £300.

The League is liberal in its grants to schools, sports bodies, etc. It provides books for pupils whose parents cannot afford them, and awards a bursary for research into the Natural History of Littledene. It recently made

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a grant for the provision of milk for school children. It is in the direction of benevolence, however, that the League has been most active. There are hundreds of records in the minutes of grants to widows, sick people and orphans. Born of the stern necessity of war, the League has lived to be an outstanding example of organised community welfare. In many ways it is the best war memorial any village could have.<sup>2</sup>

*The Organisation of Leisure.* Although the average farmer persists in saying that he has no relaxation from work, the people of Littledene have been as assiduous in organising their leisure as in arranging their welfare.

The first public hall was built in 1866 by volunteer labour, from slabs of timber taken from the debris of the sawmills. Ten years ago this old hall could still be seen after standing for nearly sixty years. It had never been painted, and the straight saw-marks on some of the lichen-covered boards showed that they had been cut laboriously by the early pit sawyers. The hall was the result of the military zeal of a member of the community; the Maori wars were raging in the North Island and a company of Volunteers along with the hall was Littledene's gesture of loyalty to the cause of Imperialism. The company was soon disbanded, but the hall remained for fourteen years the meeting place of the community. It was there that they danced in the little bush settlement to the strains of the fiddle and the concertina.

In 1880 a Town Hall was erected by means of a debenture issue among a little company of enthusiasts. Although this hall was in use for fifty years it never paid a dividend, and the shares were finally bought by the Benevolent and Improvement League. As a result of the League's efforts, a new hall was built in 1931. It is a handsome building in ferro-concrete designed to meet, as far as possible, every social need of the community: it

<sup>2</sup>See Appendix.

stands as a symbol of the social life of Littledene. The auditorium, which is provided with two dressing rooms, is fifty feet long by forty feet wide; the floor is suitable for dancing. The auditorium and gallery are provided with 450 chairs for concert work. All the chairs can be placed in the cellar under the stage when not required. The stage, 21 feet deep, is well equipped with lighting and other fixtures for dramatic work. There are two large dressing-rooms behind the stage. Built as an annex to the main hall and opening from it, is a smaller hall 25 feet by 30. This is known as the Agricultural and Pastoral Hall and is the headquarters of all Farmers' organisations in the district. The end of the stage of the main hall opens into this smaller hall by means of sliding doors, thus making possible a second little theatre for small groups. On dance nights this hall is used as a supper room: it is provided with a kitchen with electric water boilers. The hall has a full supply of crockery which is hired out as required. The talking-picture equipment belonging to the Benevolent and Improvement League is housed in the projection box above the gallery. The whole building is electrically heated.

The total cost of this hall and furniture was £4,325. A ratepayers' loan provided £3000 which carries a rate of  $\frac{1}{2}$ od. in the £; the balance of the money was raised by a carnival.<sup>3</sup> The revenue last year was £149 and the total expenses amounted only to £81. The hall is used almost daily and is the meeting place of the whole district. During the past year, there have been visiting deputations from three other country districts, and already one other hall based on the design of the Littledene hall is in course of construction.

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<sup>3</sup>The community began raising the money for this hall in 1926, and after the carnival, which terminated a year's effort, over £1000 had been raised. Although the hall was built at the beginning of 1931, the poll of ratepayers to authorise the loan took place, most fortunately, in the previous year, before the depression set in.



There are four Lodge halls in Littledene—and a small public hall known as the Coronation Hall, built in the Domain. On the outskirts of the area under survey are to be found three other halls, survivals of earlier settlements. They are used by the people living in the vicinity.

Next to halls, parks and recreation grounds play a most important role in the organised leisure of the community. Littledene has a park of sixteen acres in the centre of the township. It is well laid out in gardens and trees; it provides three tennis courts, a bowling green, croquet green, a football field, cycle track and swimming bath. It is governed by a Domain Board and is maintained by the rent from a reserve that was once used as a race-course. Two smaller parks are situated at either end of the county, and a large scenic reserve has been set apart where a river emerges from the hills and flows through a deep gorge into a forest glade.

Recreation is well organised. There is a football club, a cricket club, bowling club, tennis club, croquet club and golf club. The Sports' Association holds a competitive meeting once a year. Horse racing was well organised in the old days, but it ceased twenty-five years ago. Hunting and cycling clubs flourished once, but have now ceased to exist.

*Mechanics' Institute.* The first record of organised leisure is contained in an old minute book. In 1868 a meeting of people interested in forming some kind of educational group was held in the Drill Hall. At this meeting a settler offered a section of land 'to the people of Littledene to be held for them in perpetual trust for the following purposes, Mechanics' Institute, Library, Reading Rooms, Teetotal Meetings, Lectures, Literary Lectures or Debating Classes on Political Economy, Arts and Sciences.' Three months later the Mechanics' Institute was built at a cost of £37. A Government grant for books was obtained and the Institute soon had an active

membership of 70. It was open as a reading room on three days a week from 2 p.m. to 10 p.m. Monthly lectures were arranged at which collections were taken up in aid of the funds. Although the minutes make reference to these lectures, there is no indication of the subjects chosen by the speakers. Old residents say that Political Economy, Evolution, and Popular Science were the favourite topics in this little settlement in the days before the railway, even before there were roads.

The greatest contribution the Mechanics' Institute made to the community came through its collection of books. Until quite recently the old building was standing: the old labels were on the shelves—History, Science, Religion, Philosophy, and Fiction. For twenty years it was a powerful social force in Littledene—and then its influence began to decline. The last recorded minute was made in 1888. The building was closed for five years, and the books were handed over to the Public Library, which opened in 1893.

*Workingmen's Club.* The death knell of the Mechanics' Institute was sounded by the Workingmen's Club, which opened in 1887. To-day this Club plays an important part in the life of the district. It is a handsome stucco building with a billiards room, a card-room, a library, various small meeting rooms, and a bar for the sale of alcoholic liquor. It is the regular meeting place of the male population. The estimated adult male population is 450. Of these, 260, or 60 per cent, are members of the Club. A count of visits to the Club over one week showed that 70 per cent of members are regular visitors.

That social distinctions are not insurmountable is well illustrated by the fact that business men, farmers, artisans, and labourers are all represented in the membership of the Club. A visitor from London was recently amused to see the two captions in front of the main entrance: one reads 'Littledene Workingmen's Club' and the other,

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with a hand pointing to the second entrance, reads 'Members' Cars Only.' The visitor took a photograph of this evidence of democratic spirit, but Littledene could not understand the point of the joke.

Half of the members of the Club take books regularly from the library and the records show that this half takes on an average 40 books a year per member. There are approximately 3000 books in the library—nearly all transient fiction. It contains some travel but no science, philosophy, poetry, drama or useful arts. Five daily and weekly papers are taken by the Club and these are in much demand. Popular amusements are billiards, quoits, radio and the card tournaments which are held every Saturday night.

But the chief attraction of the Club lies in its licence to sell alcoholic liquors. The two hotels of the district are by no means social centres: they are frequented chiefly by those who have failed to be elected members of the Workingmen's Club. The Club owes its success to the fact that it supplies the amenities of a hotel in a more agreeable environment. The latest balance sheet shows that the Club is financially sound: one-fifth of its income is derived from members' subscriptions, one-fifth from billiards dues and the sale of tobacco, and three-fifths from the sale of alcoholic liquors. It pays slightly over £500 a year in wages to its two custodians.

The Club is well conducted: drunkenness is rare. It has made a real effort to help its members who became unemployed during the depression. The members are progressive regarding the introduction of improvements to the buildings and furniture. The new building is modern in design; the Club was one of the first purchasers of a radio receiving set in Littledene. But regarding the activities of the Club, the members are conservative to exasperation: the same card games, the same tournaments, and the same drinks are dispensed as were available the

day the Club opened fifty years ago. The Committee frowns on every attempt at change: the few who tried to play bridge instead of the interminable euchre were looked upon as rather dangerous radicals. Some years ago a W.E.A. lecturer applied for permission to organise a tutorial class for Club members; the Committee found no difficulty in finding reasons for refusing his request. But at the next meeting a radio salesman sold them an expensive receiving set.

*Public Library.* The public library contains about 3,500 books; it is run on a subscription basis and of late years the number of subscribers has been steadily decreasing. The records show that the thirty subscribers last year read an average of 40 books each. The mobile portion of the library contains about 600 volumes—all fiction. The old Mechanics' Institute books, mostly well-bound, occupy the topmost shelves. There are some sound books among them—volumes of history and philosophy mostly. Then the intermediate shelves contain hundreds of volumes of the defunct fiction of the last century: the lower shelves contain the soon-to-be-defunct fiction of to-day. The library has done nothing to create any literary standard in Littledene. The long succession of committees in charge have adopted the policy of providing for the tastes of the subscribers of the moment. Some years ago the subscribers themselves suggested the books to be bought; to-day the practice seems to be that of leaving the choice to a bookseller who 'understands what people need.'

The Littledene public library well illustrates the evils of a subscription basis for a library. It has now come to a standstill. The Workingmen's Club library is free to its members: the readers of ephemeral fiction can find a better choice there at no cost above the subscription which entitles them to euchre and billiards and beer. The people who put their reading on a higher plane get their books

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from the travelling library or from one of the city postal libraries.

*The Organisation of Religion.* The Canterbury province, in which Littledene is situated, was a Church of England settlement colonised in 1850 by the Canterbury Association. This Association was composed mainly of high dignitaries of Church and State. They adopted the Wakefield scheme of colonisation and planned a Church of England settlement. The Canterbury Association set out with the idea of providing very fully for religion and education in the new community. One of the chief provisions of the Wakefield scheme was a 'sufficient price' for land. The price of land in the Canterbury Settlement proper was fixed at £3 per acre, one-third of which went to the Religious and Educational Fund. Adequate provision was made for clergymen at £200 per annum, and schoolmasters at £70. But the ideal of a Church Settlement could not be fully realised. The mere provision of religious and educational facilities attracted people of other denominations from less favoured parts of the colony.

In 1850 the Bishop of New Zealand had written concerning the establishment of a new settlement such as Littledene. He pictured the arrival of the settlers: a church and a school had been built, a clergyman and a schoolmaster appointed. 'If possible a bishop will be there to meet and receive them,' wrote Bishop Selwyn, 'and accompany them at once to their own place, where a pretty wooden spire will be already built, and visible far over the plain, to guide them to the house of God, where they may offer up their thanksgivings for their successful voyage.'<sup>4</sup>

The pretty picture thus painted of a little band of enthusiasts building their settlement round a church

<sup>4</sup>*The Canterbury Papers*, No. 2, 1850, p. 33.

spire, a people dedicated to religion and education, a people with 'one church, one faith, one Lord' was far from being realised. The early settlers pushed out into the waste pastoral land beyond the early Canterbury Settlement. There was a long delay before the first Bishop of Christchurch was appointed, and it was not until 1861, ten years after the first settler came to Littledene, that the Bishop arrived to hold divine service. The first Anglican church was not built until 1866. A Baptist church was built a year earlier. Since that time the organisation of religion in Littledene has gone the way of the organisation of welfare and of leisure. As the community grew so did the variety of its religious beliefs. A man with strong denominational leanings would organise a band of followers and establish a Church.

To-day, among the 1,800 people of the area under survey, there are no fewer than ten denominations at work. The Anglican Communion, to which half the families belong, has two consecrated churches and is building another. The Baptists, Methodists, Presbyterians, Salvation Army and Roman Catholics all have places of worship. The Anglicans, Methodists, Salvation Army and Baptists have resident clergy: the Presbyterians and Roman Catholics have a part-time ministry. In addition to these groups, there are four others without a recognised place of worship. These are the Plymouth Brethren, Pentecostals, Seventh Day Adventists, and another Evangelical sect simply calling themselves Christians.

The result of all this religious organisation is that every family in Littledene is a member of some religious body. There are no heathen. When asked whether he had found any families attached to no Church at all, a clergyman who had spent six years in Littledene said emphatically that he had found none. 'There is no possibility of adding to one's Church membership,' he

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said, 'except by sheep-stealing.' The interviewer gathered that 'sheep-stealing' was an unpardonable breach of inter-denominational etiquette, and that its occurrence was rare.

The clergy visit unceasingly, every afternoon being given up to it. The people expect it and become worried if the parson stays too long away. They do not want him to talk religion when he calls, but he is expected to take a keen interest in the farm, the season and the markets. Prayer is suggested on these visits only in times of sickness in the home.

Church attendance varies so much from Sunday to Sunday that it is difficult to estimate the extent to which people go to Church. A count taken over a recent month showed that an average of slightly over three hundred individuals had attended. It is safe to say that three-quarters of the families of Littledene are represented at Church each Sunday. 'Whole families do not attend nowadays,' said one clergyman: 'they think they have done their duty if one or two members attend.'

In the matter of Church organisation farmers take a more active part than other members of the community. A study of the governing councils of the four leading Churches in Littledene showed that 31 out of 39, or nearly 80 per cent, are farmers. It is interesting to note here that in sport the opposite is the case. In the governing councils of the four leading sports, football, cricket, tennis and golf, nearly 80 per cent are non-farmers.

Religious belief inclines towards fundamentalism and a literal interpretation of the Scriptures. Ideas that were current in England in the middle of last century are found embalmed in Littledene. The reason for this is readily understood when it is realised that the early settlers lost in critical thinking what they gained in activity. The land had to be tamed; the spade was

mightier than the pen. Ideas, untouched by outside thought, became enshrined in the family. This is one of the reasons for the saying that New Zealanders are more English than the English. In the New Zealand hinterland, Littledenians are more English than the New Zealanders. Here many of the old battles are fought over and over again with weapons of seventy years ago. In spite of the invasion of the motor car and the radio, science is still opposed to religion. To quote one farmer, 'Darwin woke up one morning with an idea that man was descended from a monkey and was not created by God. But no one has ever really been able to find the missing link. Scientists are still searching for it. And on his deathbed Darwin recanted, but scientists have kept his recantation from the people.' Ideas such as these have grown out of the old science versus religion combat.

Some ten years ago a W.E.A. tutor lectured on evolution and the origin of species and was careful to show the error of the popular monkey-man descent idea. He did his best to explain Darwin's work for science. The result was an impassioned sermon in a fundamentalist church. The preacher ended each outburst with 'you can believe that you are descended from monkeys if you like, but I'm not, I'm not, I'm not!' A member of this congregation said that he believed that the bones of Pithecanthropus and other pre-human forms were put there by the devil to shake our faith! The more fundamental groups seem to base their whole religion on the book of Genesis and the Ten Commandments—the most important of which is the fourth. Sunday observance is made the test of character and of piety. Among the more liberal groups, however, especially among the younger people who attend church discussion groups, the critical attitude towards thought is being re-born.

The many Church groups have the unfortunate effect of dividing the community into a multiplicity of small

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## CHAPTER V

### PASSING THE TIME

‘THERE was a time,’ said an old resident, ‘when people used to meet together in one another’s houses for cards or for musical evenings. And hardly a week went by without a surprise party. But that’s all changed now. People gossip over the telephone but they seldom visit one another’s homes. When they go out they go to dances or meetings.’<sup>1</sup> The phenomenal growth of social organisation has indeed absorbed most of the leisure time of the people: there is little personal leisure. Every night of the week and almost every afternoon there is a meeting of some kind. With six or seven Churches organising choir practices, bible classes, young people’s guilds and what-not, the week is booked up before Sunday is over. In the churches the announcements for the week seldom leave a day free for the faithful. Then there are all the meetings of Sports’ Committees, Women’s Organisations, School Committees, Infant Welfare Committees and a dozen others.

Littledene loves meetings. It is the proud boast of the really important people that there is ‘always something on.’ Meetings are carried out with parliamentary precision, with much proposing and seconding, with much rising to order. It is a point of honour to attend meetings. There is a tendency for the more

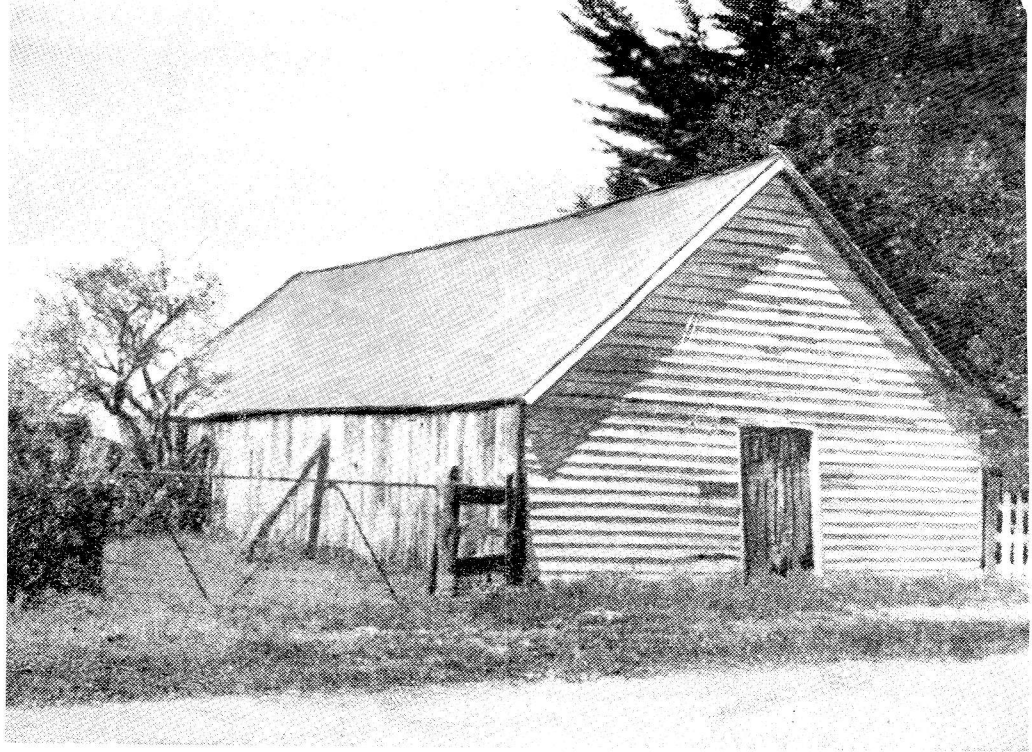
<sup>1</sup>The decay of formal visiting is apparently widespread. See Lynd, Robert S., and Ellen, M., *Middletown*. London, 1929, p. 275.

organisations. With each Church trying to organise its young people and its old people, its Bible Classes and Church Guilds, there is a hopeless overlapping and loss of force. The groups become so small that they cannot exist with any vigour. Thus the Church, which was once the unifying factor in village life—the one thing that related all secular activity to a Divine purpose—has become, in Littledene, the means of keeping people apart. The result is that secular groups have a better chance of survival: there is little effective group life within the Church.

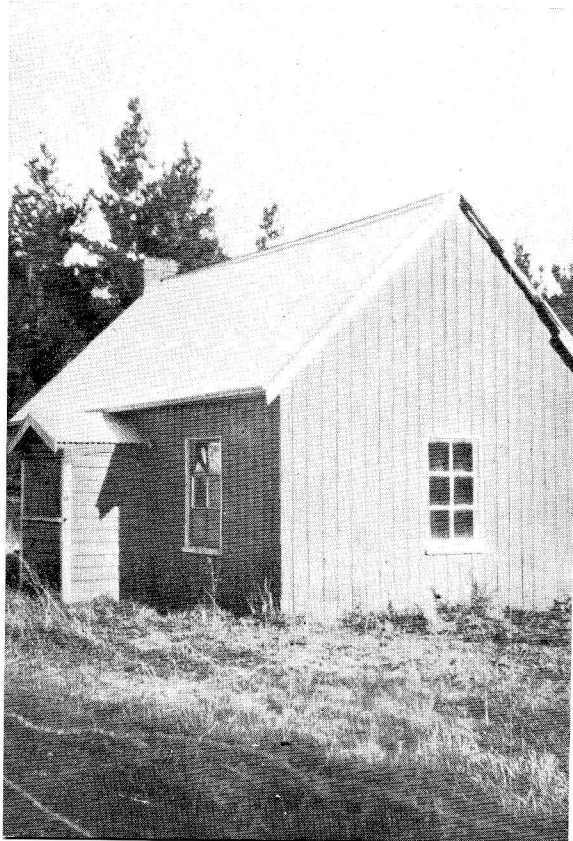
There have been many capable men in the ministry in Littledene, but they have been powerless to bring about any re-union, or any great alteration in the outlook of their particular group. Stipends are insufficient to buy the books necessary to keep in touch with modern thought. The church buildings are poor, uncomfortable and barn-like. Where a village might have a church of some dignity, beauty and inspiration in its architecture, Littledene has seven unlovely wooden buildings far inferior to those used for secular purposes. This is a result not of taking thought but rather of the period of social evolution through which New Zealand has passed—a period in which every newcomer desired more than anything else to perpetuate the group to which he belonged. In Littledene these groups struggle side by side awaiting a new social sense—awaiting, perhaps, the time when education shall have shown the deepest needs of the individual—needs that can be satisfied only in the society of his fellows. In the meantime the people are united into one group only on the more material side, where the issue is unclouded: that is why the parks and halls are so much more worthy of Littledene than are its churches.

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THE STORY OF  
COMMUNITY



The Drill Hall, 1867.

The Mechanics' Institute, 1868.

The Town Hall, 1880.

The new community centre, 1931.



LITTLEDENE'S

CENTRE



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enlightened youth of the place to be absorbed, and robbed of their leisure, by a monstrous over-organisation. The young are advised to be up and doing, to get on committees, to belong to things. The undifferentiated community of the country districts demands that everyone shall be interested in everything.

The population of Littledene works out at 12 to the square mile. There is so much wide open space of mother earth that the Littledenians satisfy their gregarious instincts by a passion for meetings. A successful dance in the Town Hall will bring in 300 people—nearly half the dancing population of an area of two hundred square miles. Dances are not the vivacious meetings one might imagine them to be: the sexes do not mingle easily or naturally. Before the dance begins the women emerge from the dressing-rooms and sit round the hall. Some of the older men and a few of the younger ones may be talking to the women, but the great mass of the male youth stands huddled together at the door. On the stage the 'band' consists of a piano, a violin, an assemblage of drums and timpani, and the wry-nosed saxophone. The music begins—and no one moves—not for a long time. Then a youth more adventurous than the rest takes a partner. The others follow and the dance goes on. When the music stops the women return to their chairs and the men to the safety of numbers by the door. The programme is monotonous—the lancers and waltzes for the older folk who like to recall the good old days, interminable foxtrots and one-steps for the young. No one leaves the hall; that is frowned upon by the older people, who are always on the watch lest any of the evils associated with city dances should invade the country. Littledene is pertinaciously moral; dancing appears to be a serious business, and one notices much evidence of inhibition that is missing in larger communities.

Meetings of this kind are classified into balls, dances, socials, social evenings, and social hours. Balls are sponsored each year by the bachelors, the spinsters, the volunteers, the footballers, and the Infant Welfare Society. They have a 'band' of four instruments and a 'sit-down' supper. A dance, on the other hand, has a pianist only and is promoted by the School Committee or the smaller sports' bodies. It also has a supper of the 'sit-down' variety. A social has a few dances and a number of 'items'—songs and recitations. It usually has a 'pass-round' supper. A social evening consists of parlour games and 'items.' A social hour is supper and talk after a lecture or a meeting in connection with one of the churches. A week never passes in the winter without one or more of these functions.

Next to the dance the card-party is the most popular form of communal amusement. Progressive euchre is played for small prizes—pounds of tea and legs of mutton—every week during the winter at the Workingmen's Club. The Oddfellows run a weekly euchre tournament during the winter and whenever a Sports' Club is in difficulties it does likewise. During the past winter there have been three weekly card tournaments in Littledene. Euchre is the game most favoured. It is played rapidly without much comment—seriously without any joy. The Littledenians attach much importance to the winning of the prize and woe betide the novice who ruins his partner's chance of winning.

*Giving.* It is impossible to convey any adequate idea of the way Littledene spends its time without referring to its ideas on giving. The average person will give freely of his time, but sparingly of his money unless he is getting something directly in return. Less than one half of the funds of Church and sports' bodies are raised by direct giving. When funds are short it is necessary to 'get something up'; in other words people will pay if they

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are being mildly amused in return, or if they have an excuse for coming together, and if by paying they are able to 'pass the time.'

Discussions on direct giving versus bazaars and other forms of entertainment are continually being raised in churches, but a new clergyman soon learns that direct giving is very unpopular. A church warden interviewed on the subject said that, while personally favouring direct giving, he thought that people liked to give their time, to give their day's work, to make something for the good cause. It is all a form of self-expression, and many people cannot afford to give directly. It is true that people do need social intercourse and they do need self-expression; but it is a sad state of affairs when such insistent human needs, which might be satisfied by creative work, are debased into the habitual, futile and uninteresting work connected with popular methods of raising money.

One or two examples of the futility of this method of giving will make the point clear. There are 24 women on the committee of the Infant Welfare Society. Funds recently were short, so they decided to hold a bridge party. The 24 women made all the arrangements and provided supper. With their husbands for partners the 48 sat down in the evening to play bridge for four hours. The funds were augmented by £6. But the supper was most sumptuous and a conservative estimate placed its total cost in the neighbourhood of £5. This is the popular anaesthetic method of giving in Littledene. It has already been pointed out that fine cooking is the usual method of expression of the farmwife. And, as food must be supplied for the large number of meetings in the course of a year, it is readily understood how the time is passed. Again, the School Committee appealed recently for funds to provide septic tanks for the school. £80 was required, and the whole district set out to play euchre through one

long winter with septic tanks on the horizon. It took twenty meetings to get the septic tanks and cost the community 4,000 individual hours of leisure, besides the time taken in cooking for the suppers that were always served. Another popular form of raising money is the 'Sale Tea.' There are twenty-six market days in the year and these days are carefully apportioned to the churches, sports' bodies and other organisations in need of funds. The burden of cooking for these afternoon teas is one that falls heavily on the women of Littledene, who often cook for a whole day before the sale tea, and spend the whole day serving it. The financial result is in no way commensurate with the great amount of effort involved.

Then every Church has its annual bazaar, disguised in one way or another. The Methodists hold a daffodil show plus bazaar in September; the Presbyterians make theirs into a garden party in November; the Anglicans combine a rose show with a bazaar in December. Bazaars never vary. Through the long habit of years the stalls are always placed in the same relative positions in the hall. Just inside the door on the right is the produce stall, with its sacks of wheat and potatoes, its piles of vegetables, its sheep for weight-guessing. The sweets stall represents weeks of work in making little paper baskets and home-made sweets. Then there is the 'work' stall. This is the result of months of leisure gone into needlework. Intricate patterns are worked on such transitory things as aprons and oven cloths. All the stock commercial patterns are seen over and over again. One comes to suspect that there is a kind of perennial currency in these articles—that one buys from one bazaar to have something to give to the next. In the corner, ice-cream and fruit salad are sold: the afternoon tea is dispensed in the supper room. A flower and garden stall, a laundry stall, and then a bran tub or a fish pond complete the list. In the centre, flowers are exhibited. But a bazaar

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gives rise to an intricate network of organisation. Each stall holder must provide in advance the articles to be sold. To do this she arranges a series of afternoon gift meetings, with cards and talk, on the bring and buy principle. This goes on for weeks before the bazaar and further absorbs any leisure left to the already overworked housewives. The women specialise in the parts they play in bazaars: 'Mrs. A is so good in the produce.' 'We cannot get along without Mrs. B in the refreshments.' And Mrs. A and Mrs. B know their particular supporters in the urgent business of furnishing their particular stalls. Everybody supports all the bazaars, especially where churches are concerned. The people recognize that if they are divided on small points of doctrine they are one in the all-important matter of raising money. A clergyman from the city suggested at a parish meeting that his parishioners should support their own church first. There was an outburst of 'We can't expect the Presbyterians to support us if we don't support them.' And, 'Where would we be without the Methodists?'

There is no need to multiply examples. Enough have been given to show the way the Littledeniens have allowed their gregarious and money-making instincts to absorb their leisure time. They are getting from it a certain amount of self-expression, and in some measure they satisfy their instincts of creativeness in making the pabulum upon which bazaars and such like feed. But it is creativeness of a very low order and in no way progressive.

*Personal Leisure.* The Littledeniens do not regard this social organisation as leisure: it is all part of the day's work. Leisure to them is time not accounted for, not organised by the Great Society or the Little Society. And there is no leisure. 'If I had an extra hour a day I would read,' said a farmer. 'I have no time to read.' But a visit one evening to his home revealed the fact that the farmer

in question was confusing the four dimensions. What he regarded as no time to read was really no space to read. In his kitchen the children were doing their homework, the mother sewing, the older boys and girls talking of their church clubs. The kitchen was too small to admit the representatives of so many diverse groups without reducing conversation and thinking to the least common denominator. What the people lack is a vital, personal, satisfying use of leisure. The art of conversation is a lost art even among the better educated. 'What do people talk about?' was asked of everyone interviewed. 'About other people: about hard times: about the shortage of money: about the dry season.' These were the answers received. 'But don't people ever talk about *things*, about problems of world interest?' 'No. If there is anything *startling* in the paper of course we talk about it.'<sup>2</sup>

Among the wealthier farmers there is some visiting of a social kind. But the conversation is entirely about farms, crops, prices of manure and seeds, yields and prospects of yields. There is practically no conversation of affairs beyond New Zealand, very little beyond the immediate neighbourhood. Men and women do not enter into serious discussions. The married men believe that women are not interested in important affairs. They drift off to play billiards while the women sit together and knit.

*Sex.* As in most country districts, there is very little understanding or friendship between men and women. By and large the men believe that women's place is in the kitchen, that they like to meet together often to talk about clothes and other trifles, that if a man becomes friendly with women outside his immediate household, it can only mean, in the euphemistic vernacular, 'one thing.' The young are encouraged to marry early, 'settle down' and

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<sup>2</sup>See Appendix.

become respectable. Sex is never mentioned in the family circle; as far as could be ascertained, there is practically no instruction in the sex life of human beings. 'I've brought up a family of six,' said one farmer. 'Me or their mother never told them anything, but they were reared among the farm animals and I reckon they were able to put two and two together.'

The courtship of the rising generation is a matter for the constant attention of the older people. The technique of respectable courtship never varies. A boy and a girl, after meeting once or twice shyly and secretly, decide to meet openly, generally on a Sunday afternoon—for all the world to see. Word goes round that Joe and Mary have had their first 'walk out.' After this open declaration, the course of true love is very much out of the hands of Joe and Mary; the community takes the matter up and paves the way to the altar. Very seldom is an engagement broken—and divorce is practically unknown. People in the country do not expect much from marriage; nothing short of extreme cruelty ever drives a woman to seek divorce.

Illegitimacy is very rare in the district. Those in a position to know, through a long and morbid interest in the time of first births, however, say that a great many marriages are unchaste. 'But there's nothing wrong in that,' was the opinion of a farmer who rationalised his own conduct by saying that 'a man has a right to know whether he is going to have a family to help him out on the farm before tying himself up.'

Prostitution, as far as could be ascertained, is not a serious menace to the young. But it was easy to locate two houses of doubtful fame with a lengthy clientèle of middle-aged married men. In each case the attraction was a mentally defective local girl, one being an illegitimate living with her mother, while the other was the daughter of a labourer who connived at what was going on.

*Drinking.* There is a very decided opinion in favour of prohibition in Littledene. Drinking is no longer a pastime: serious drunkenness is practically unknown: the two hotels are on the verge of bankruptcy and the Workingmen's Club will not permit drunkenness on its premises. This was not always the case. At a meeting to decide how to celebrate the Silver Jubilee of King George V, it was recalled that at the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria, a hogshead of beer was provided out of the funds and distributed free in the street. Shortly afterwards a local man was elected a member of Parliament and he showed his appreciation of his supporters by providing a similar free hogshead. The motor car has been the real cause of this modern sobriety. A community with a car to every two families must needs be sober to get home safely—the pedestrian half as well as the motoring half. 'In the good old days,' said the man who told the story of free hogsheads, 'you just gave the horse his head and he stopped at your gate.' So much for progress! Sixty years ago four hotels flourished in Littledene; closing time was 10 p.m. There is extant an interesting old document in the form of a petition with two hundred signatures praying that one hotel be allowed to remain open until 11 p.m., as meetings and entertainments did not close until after ten o'clock.

*Unconscious Leisure.* Farming does not permit of continuously effective work. With present methods at any rate, it is impossible to run a farm like a factory. There is much unforeseen disturbance of routine. A dry spell causing the failure of a crop means that a new line of action must be thought out. A farmer spends much of his time leaning on gates contemplating crops, deciding whether they are growing well, whether they ought to be ploughed up, fed off, or top-dressed. Then he has no objective method of judging the progress of his animals: he spends much time in looking at them and sizing them

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up. All this is part of the day's work, but it has produced a habit of mind that is hard to alter. His effective leisure is non-existent because he finds it difficult to approach a new problem in any other frame of mind. It is this frame of mind that has largely determined the social organisation of the country districts. The farmer is conservative, and loyal to the group to which he belongs: he is distrustful of any new group which may interfere with his customary way of thinking.

A sidelight on the inclusiveness of social organisation in Littledene is provided by the celebration of the Royal Jubilee referred to above. It was decided to hold a procession in which 'every organisation could take part.' Most people found that they were eligible to take part on half-a-dozen counts. There was much preparation by all concerned. When the day arrived the procession was half a mile long; everybody was in it. First came the brass band playing a march; behind the band, the various lodges in full regalia. Then a float representing Britannia and her colonies. There followed the displays of the Farmers' Union, the various sports' clubs, the Women's Christian Temperance Union and so on, and so on. The Salvation Army band brought up the rear with its blood and fire banner. But few loyal Littledenians saw the procession; everyone participated so fully that the writer of this survey and a few latecomers were the only ones privileged to see it pass by.

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## CHAPTER VI

### THE GREAT SOCIETY AND THE LITTLE

THE first settlers in Littledene were distant a long day's journey by bullock waggon from the capital of the province. Horse-drawn vehicles across the scrublands made the journey only slightly less; roads and four-wheeled coaches reduced the time to six hours. But in those days New Zealand itself was a weary ninety days from 'Home.'<sup>1</sup> The coming of the railway and the telephone brought the Great Society nearer. To-day the city capital can be reached by motor bus in two hours and the radio has brought the once isolated settlement into continuous touch with the world.

The Post Office delivers on an average just over 3000 letters and packets and over 200 newspapers every week. It is thus an important link with the outside world. It pays out pensions, old age, soldiers', widows', and family allowances. It receives monies for motor and radio registration, Savings' Bank, Government Departments, employment taxes, etc. The Postmaster is in charge of the allocation of monies to the unemployed; he is registrar of births, deaths and marriages; he is in frequent demand for witnessing statutory declarations and acts as

<sup>1</sup>An amusing story illustrates the isolation of the Little Society in those days. In the sixties the Church was in urgent need of funds. But although the attendance was good, the collection plate was always full of groats and three-penny pieces. The churchwarden was the one and only storekeeper of Littledene. By commandeering the collection every Sunday and by bringing back only sixpenny pieces on his occasional visits to the city bank, he considerably augmented the funds!

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general adviser to the public in all matters pertaining to Government services.

The policeman has come to be something more than the representative of law and order. A considerable part of his time is spent in collecting statistics of farm production, etc. His advice is frequently sought on problems of law and he is able to avoid much trouble by meeting it half way. Littledene is a law-abiding community: an examination of the records showed that the number of convictions per thousand of population in a recent year was only 2.19.

The bank manager gives a great deal of gratuitous service to the community. His advice is continually sought in filling up returns of land and income—and in the rather involved business of farm finance.

It takes all sorts to make a world and the many sorts that have come to Littledene have contributed to its many-sided organisation. A schoolmaster who continued to live in the district after retiring has a long list to his credit. He is the local representative of the Public Trustee, Secretary of the Farmers' Union, the Agricultural and Pastoral Association, the Benevolent and Improvement League. He is the representative of a city newspaper and author of a history of the district.

Some years ago ill health sent to New Zealand a highly qualified London doctor. For the past fourteen years he has lived and worked in Littledene. He has promoted in the community a positive attitude towards health and has encouraged the people to make the best use of the many advantages of country life. It is due to his influence that Littledene has an open-air school, with its avenues of trees growing into arbor classrooms for future generations of children. The school was able to introduce a milk ration for underweight children through his influence; his interest in the farming community has popularised the testing of cows suspected of tuberculosis.

In fact, everything of value in this community can be traced, as elsewhere, to the work of one or two individuals. But the undifferentiated country community, which has so many obvious advantages, has a serious drawback: everyone is entitled to express an opinion about everything. The result is that the human tendency to resist everything that threatens one's sense of security in the old order is continually apparent. The voice of the majority is resistant to change. Minute books through page after page tell the same story. It took five years of argument to get electric light, two years of controversy to get consolidation of schools. In every discussion people who are not even remotely connected with the issues are loudest in their disapproval. At a meeting in the old condemned schoolroom in the days before consolidation, a wealthy farmer who owns a motor car and a radio said, 'This schoolroom was good enough for me and it is good enough for my grandchildren.' The people who are determined to resist Sunday afternoon games are those who prefer a Sunday afternoon sleep. But the mere fact that resistance is there shows that there is life in the community; it defends its sense of security in the old order, and feels its power in doing so. All this must be qualified by another observation: when once something new is adopted, all resistance vanishes. The moment the minority becomes a majority, the community is unanimous. Littledene takes the new thing to its bosom to defend it against further innovation.

But resistance to change is slowly breaking down. The Great Society has become aggressive in its search for forgotten corners of the earth. It is teaching even the rural dweller that the only thing he can be sure of is change; the young are learning that to resist unreasonably is to show a complete lack of knowledge. The economic depression has brought the Great Society into closer co-operation with the Little in some unexpected ways.

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The farmer, looking round for new ways of turning an honest penny, has explored the possibility of paying-guests. The city dweller with less to spend on holidays has welcomed the idea of a fortnight or so in the country. Littledene, with its many scenic attractions, has taken full advantage of the position and some twenty farm-houses now have a regular clientèle of city visitors. For the past five years a well-known University lecturer in engineering has spent his vacations on a small sheep farm. The farmer in question said that he had changed his ideas on irrigation since his coming. At an agricultural farm an artist was found helping with the harvest and enjoying every minute of it; at another a city lawyer was prodding the sheep through the dip. All this is tending to raise the standard of living on the farms concerned. Guests dine with the family and a new twist is given to conversation. It also means that some few city people are taking a more lively and sympathetic interest in the problems of the land. A farmer's wife said that she enjoyed having paying-guests. She had been able to buy new cutlery and table linen and some new furniture. 'And they appreciate my cooking in a way the family has never done. They don't get hot buttered scones and fresh eggs and cream in town. It's lonely when they go. And they don't give you the least bit of trouble.' It is noticeable that just before the Christmas guests arrive Littledene tidies up its streets and generally puts its house in order. Extra cinema programmes are arranged at times when visitors are expected.

The outside world is now reaching the rural community through the correspondence clubs to which the children belong. More than half the children in the upper classes of the schools correspond with children in other parts of the world, more particularly with the U.S.A. where such clubs are well organised. A High

School girl who had corresponded with a French school-girl showed a series of photographs illustrating the history of architecture in France since Roman times. Finally, there is evidence that people are corresponding with relatives overseas much more than formerly. The Great War, which sent thousands of New Zealanders to Europe, reunited families separated during two generations. The Women's Institute is also at work creating links between forgotten relatives living a whole world apart.

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## CHAPTER VII

### CHILDREN AND SCHOOLS

SOME facts of importance emerge from the foregoing study of Littledene, the most striking of which is the sociability of the people. The popular ideas that the farmer is individualistic, that his work is selfish and his life solitary are shown to be erroneous. The structure of the rural community shows that there is an interdependence of its parts as real as that of a city. The business of farming depends upon a high degree of neighbourliness, a quality which exerts a strong influence on the social life of a community whose chief weakness is that its existing organisations tend to perpetuate a social habit rather than satisfy a social need. There is something too sheep-like in its make-up: its groups need the stimulus of new ideas. A more vivid personal contribution from the members of the various groups would do much to improve the social life of the place.

There are many indications, however, that fundamental changes in the social life of Littledene are taking place. These beginnings may be traced through a consideration of a large group that this study has so far taken no account of—the children and adolescents. How far are these young people being prepared for a full life in a rural community? What provision is made for their all-round development? How far are the young bringing new fire to the old altars? What new groups are they

creating? In short, is the organised education of children closely related to the needs of the community?

*Children and Population.* The number of children born in Littledene in 1934 was 33, or 18 per 1000 of population. This figure, by the way, happens to be exactly equal to the birthrate of the whole of New Zealand.<sup>1</sup> The population of the whole district in sawmilling days was in the neighbourhood of 2,600. Official statistics are an unreliable guide to the past population because county boundaries have changed several times since the first census was taken; but until 1926 the population figures show a steadily declining trend. The census of 1936, however, shows that during the previous decade the population has become stabilised in the neighbourhood of 1,800 for the whole area under survey. This figure, maintained for 10 years, is not likely to increase or decrease to any great extent. The child population has shown a steeper decline, as the following table shows:—

*Number of Children Attending School in the  
Littledene Area*

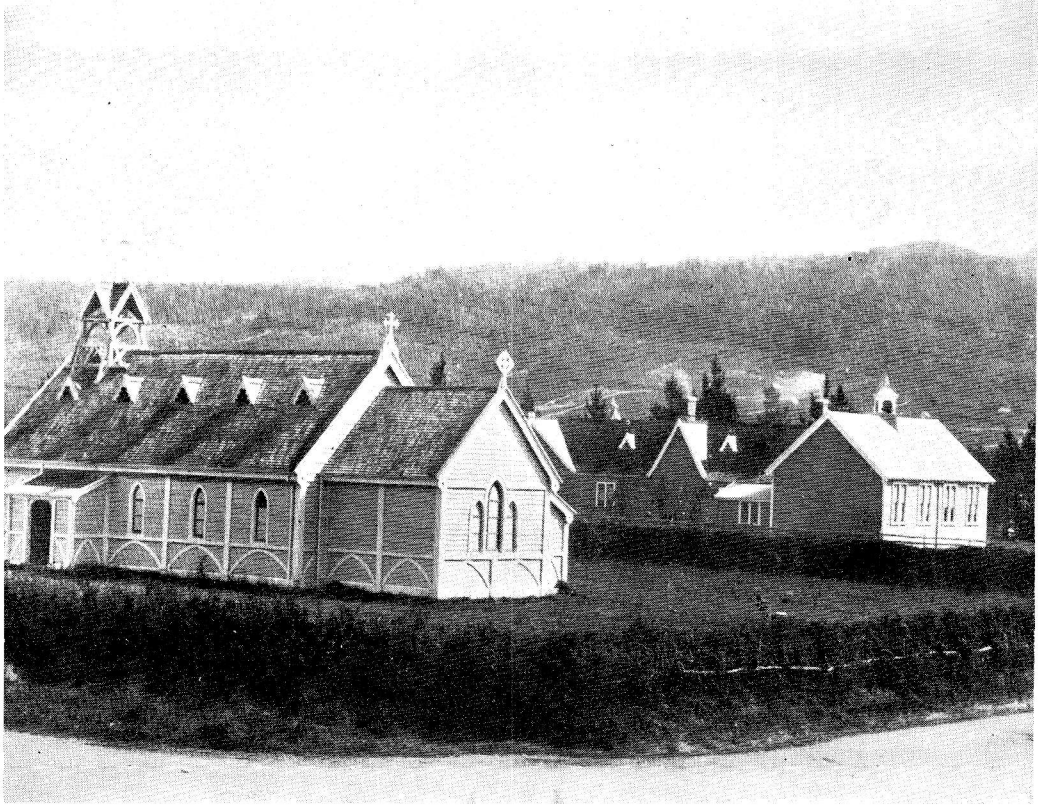
1884	-	-	-	-	-	-	571
1894	-	-	-	-	-	-	491
1904	-	-	-	-	-	-	409
1914	-	-	-	-	-	-	366
1924	-	-	-	-	-	-	344
1934	-	-	-	-	-	-	249

To the 1934 figure should be added about 30 five-year-olds who were temporarily excluded from school by the economy legislation of the depression. At the beginning of 1937, with the five-year-olds back, the primary school population was only 250.

The reasons for this decline in the number of children

<sup>1</sup>N.Z. *Official Year Book*, 1935, p. 68. The death rate for the same year in Littledene was 5 per 1000, as compared with 8.3 for New Zealand.





Church and School in the seventies—from an old photograph.  
The Church was built in 1866 and the School in 1873.

The infant department of the new consolidated school.

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may be found in the restriction in the size of families as a result of the economic crisis. Littledene felt the post-war depression of 1921 very severely. Six years later the decline in school population became apparent: since then it has continued to fall. Another factor is the tendency towards later marriages in the past few years.<sup>2</sup> In pre-depression days farmers retired from their farms to live in the township or city at a comparatively early age, usually in the early sixties, leaving the farm to be worked by a married son. This tendency has been arrested of late. The majority of holdings are to-day being farmed by elderly people with grown-up families long past school age. There are fewer children on farms to-day: every year more grown-up sons and daughters go away to employment in the city. These are the factors which give Littledene to-day half the child population of fifty years ago with two-thirds of the adult population.

*Infant Welfare.* Along with the tendency towards fewer children, however, has come the tendency towards greater attention to infant welfare. The modern infant enters into the rural life of Littledene with many advantages. Weight of public opinion in favour of the scientific care of children has increased so much during the past ten years that the child to-day has a ninety per cent chance of sharing in the many benefits provided by the Royal New Zealand Society for the Health of Women and Children. This Society, commonly called the Plunket Society from the name of its first president, Lady Plunket, was founded by Dr. Truby King in 1907. In 1934 the Society had no fewer than 48,274 babies under its supervision: this number is 68% of the babies born during the year.<sup>3</sup> To the work of

<sup>2</sup>The marriage rate in Littledene in 1935 was 4 per thousand of population compared with 7.16 for the whole of New Zealand. In other respects the decline in population is a tendency that Littledene shares with the rest of rural New Zealand.

<sup>3</sup>Report of the Royal New Zealand Society for the Health of Women and Children, 1935.

this organisation may be attributed the fact that New Zealand has the lowest infant mortality in the world.

It may be said briefly that the Plunket Society is a voluntary organisation, supported by subscriptions subsidised by the Government. Its main work falls under four heads. First of all the Society maintains hospitals for babies in the larger centres throughout New Zealand. Qualified nurses—those who have been through the regular hospital course—are selected for further training in infant welfare. These nurses become local Plunket nurses; they advise mothers and check up on the health of babies. Secondly, the baby hospital offers training in the care of children to girls who do not wish to take the general hospital course. These girls qualify for positions as infant nurses in private homes. The course is becoming so popular that every year sees an increasing number of applicants on the waiting list. Thirdly, the Society produces supplies of standardised foods for infants. Lastly, it organises local committees and undertakes the dissemination of knowledge in the natural feeding and care of infants.

The Plunket Society extended its work to Littledene eleven years ago. The nurse spends one day a week in the district. Market day is chosen for the visit so that mothers and children may come to the infant welfare centre when the men are coming in to the sale. Part of the time is spent by the nurse at the centre and mothers who are able are expected to bring their children in; the rest of the day is spent in paying visits to homes where either mother or baby is ill. The method of carrying out the work is simple and effective. Each child is allotted a book in which every week its weight is graphed and a record of progress is made. Detailed instructions as to feeding, etc., are written in the book when necessary. The nurse has at her disposal the best information and all the resources of the Society; perhaps her most valuable work lies in educating mothers

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to an understanding of the value of natural feeding, sleep, sunshine and fresh air.

Under an exceedingly capable and understanding nurse the work in Littledene has progressed. Last year 31 out of the 33 babies born were attended regularly by the nurse; this is 93 per cent of the babies born, showing that Littledene is exceeding the rest of New Zealand in its attention to infant welfare. Of the 31 babies attended, 28 were breast-fed, two were partially breast-fed, while only one, an orphan, was artificially fed. Ten years ago 30 per cent of the local babies were artificially fed; to-day only a pathological condition in the mother prevents natural feeding. The main work of the Plunket Nurse is concerned with children up to the age of one year, but supervision of the health of the child up to the age of 5 years is undertaken if parents so desire. The nurse is doing some pre-natal work, but this is limited, as there is at present no consulting room apart from the rest room. The nurse, when interviewed, said that her instructions were usually followed, that the health of the babies was good and that every child under her care had reached normal weight. The people of the district contribute £35 a year to the nurse's salary and an additional £8 towards the cost of running her car. Of these amounts less than one half comes from direct subscription; the remainder is raised by a Plunket Society luncheon on ewe-fair day, by card parties or afternoon teas.

*School.* With infant welfare organised on sound lines, it remains to consider how far the school is meeting its responsibilities in providing for the all-round education of the child. The history of education in the district shows that until quite recently the school had very little understanding of the individual, or contact with the community for which it was preparing its pupils. This is not to be

wondered at. The development of a philosophy of rural community education is still very much in the future as far as New Zealand is concerned.

In the fifties and sixties of last century, one or two private household schools catered for the young; in the late sixties a Church of England school was opened with some forty or fifty pupils. Early in 1872 a public meeting of residents decided to apply for a state school under the terms of the Ordinance of 1871 (of the Canterbury Provincial Government), and towards the end of the year a one-roomed school was built; a second was opened two years later at the opposite end of the district; two others followed in 1876. The last of these small schools was built as late as 1916, when there were eight in Littledene area.

Great educational difficulties had to be surmounted in the early days of free, compulsory, secular education provided by the State. The first teachers, educated in England along classical lines, found themselves confronted with the task of presenting the three R's to retarded pupils in a virgin bush settlement. Many of the parents did not take kindly to a system which robbed them of the help of the older children for five hours of every day. Inspection of schools was rigid in the early days and much depended upon results in the all-important tests in arithmetic and spelling. It is small wonder that corporal punishment to the verge of cruelty was practised freely; very few old residents remember anything happy connected with the learning process in those times. They remember that the schoolwork was hard and academic and that the life outside the school was hard and practical. The one had little bearing on the other. The great majority left school able to read, write and calculate, but they had an educational complex that prevented them from using for the greater enjoyment of leisure the skills they had acquired.

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Few ever went to a secondary school. The only avenue to a higher education led through a four-year pupil-teachership and every year a Standard VI pupil took this road. The pupil-teacher took a large share of the actual teaching of the school: in addition he was instructed by the headmaster in the art of teaching, in Arithmetic, English, Mathematics, Geography, History and Latin. At the end of the pupil-teacher period he completed his professional studies at the nearest Training College.

As time went on some measure of secondary instruction was introduced. Headmasters in country districts developed the habit of retaining their best pupils for an extra year in the seventh standard. This practice led to the establishment, early in the present century, of secondary classes attached to primary schools; wherever this took place the school became a District High School. There are to-day eighty-one District High Schools in New Zealand giving secondary instruction of a more or less academic character to nearly five thousand pupils in rural areas.

In 1913 the largest of the Littledene schools, then a four-teacher unit, obtained the necessary minimum of fifteen secondary pupils and was declared a District High School. The secondary teacher was in charge of a four-year course leading to the university entrance examination. But in spite of the fact that woodwork and cookery (taught by itinerant instructors), agriculture and dairy science were given a place in the curriculum, the outlook generally was bookish and academic. The main stress was laid upon English, Mathematics, French, History, and Chemistry, and although only five per cent of the secondary pupils of Littledene went on to the University, these subjects were taught to the artificial standards set up for University entrance. The secondary teachers were well qualified academically, but they had little knowledge of

or sympathy with the educational needs of a rural community.

*Consolidation of Schools.* The next step in the provision of better equipment for the education of the children of Littledene was made in 1923 when it was brought before the notice of the local Committee of the largest and most central of the schools that the fifty-year-old building was no longer suitable for classes. Teachers were beginning to ask for more space, more light and air, more congenial surroundings. Furthermore, the old centres of community life had moved considerably since saw-milling came to an end some forty years before. The old settlements had moved; the old schools remained. The Committee decided to apply for a new school and to urge the Department of Education to consider the establishment of a consolidated school, i.e. a school to serve a larger community by conveyance of children to a centre.<sup>4</sup> At that time the Department had built one or two consolidated schools and readily consented to the request for one in Littledene; but two years of argument were necessary before the committees of some of the smaller schools agreed to the plan.

The Department of Education provided a new central site of six acres, to which the local community added another four, thus providing an ample school-ground of ten acres. Early in 1925 two rooms were built on the new site as an infant department of the re-organised school, and one of the original schools was used to accommodate the older children. Four small schools were closed through this consolidation. Seven years were to elapse, however, before the old school was demolished and the complete consolidated school came into being on the new site.

The new school serves an area roughly in the form of a semi-circle with a radius of eight miles. Children are

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<sup>4</sup>Consolidated country schools in New Zealand and America resemble the 'Area' schools of England.

conveyed in four buses. The rooms of the new school are separate units placed to get the greatest possible benefit of sunlight; the front wall of each room is a sliding door, and two walls are made almost entirely of windows. With three sides of the schoolroom nearly always open to the playground, the old prison-like atmosphere has gone. The children find that the wall is down that parted their fathers from the world outside.

The boys and girls of Littledene normally enter school at five years old, although attendance is not compulsory until the age of seven. The infant department offers an easy transition from the home to the larger community of children. Its three rooms open direct to playing fields with a restful near view of green hills, and blue mountains in the distance. Only one-third of the timetable is devoted to formal work; the rest is given to handwork, dramatisation, singing, nature study, games and rambles. This department of the school has one great advantage in the matter of equipment: it is provided with light, easily moved tables and chairs which make it possible to use floor-space to best advantage or to arrange classes in the open air. The rest of the school, however, is still equipped with desks. They are single desks, it is true, but they are heavy, immovable, and packed tight into sunlit rooms that were meant for freedom. It is a strange anomaly that the workshop that makes the modern fittings for open-air schools continues to make the desks that prevent the schools being used to their best advantage. A far-sighted school committee has planted an extensive area in trees with a view to providing future generations with arbor classrooms.

After passing through the infant department, the child embarks upon the six-year journey through the 'Standards' to the end of his primary education. At the

end of the Standard VI year, generally between the ages of twelve and fourteen, the pupil takes the Proficiency certificate examination—a test which is given throughout New Zealand.

*Subjects for Proficiency Certificate<sup>5</sup>*

English	Language	{ Composition - 100 marks						
		{ Formal English 50    „						
	Reading, including recitation 100    „							
	Spelling - - - - 25    „							
	Writing - - - - 25    „							
Arithmetic		-	-	-	-	-	100	„
Other subjects	History - - - - 50    „							
	Geography - - - - 50    „							
	Science - - - - 50    „							
	Drawing - - - - 50    „							
	Handwork - - - - 50    „							

A Proficiency certificate may be obtained by scoring sixty per cent of the marks in English and Arithmetic together; i.e. 240 marks out of the 400 possible. But the marks scored in reading and in composition must not fall below 55; in Arithmetic 45 is the minimum standard. In 'other subjects' a wide 'satisfactory standard'<sup>6</sup> is required. The Proficiency certificate admits the holder to a free place in any Government post-primary school. For pupils who do not quite reach Proficiency certificate standard, a Competency<sup>7</sup> certificate is provided.

<sup>5</sup>The Proficiency certificate examination has now been abolished (1937). Teachers now have the opportunity of framing a much more liberal curriculum, with much less time devoted to Arithmetic and formal English. There is little evidence as yet to show that the abolition of the examination has affected the primary school curriculum in Littledene.

<sup>6</sup>The fixing of a high standard in English and Arithmetic had the unfortunate effect of making this 'satisfactory' standard in other subjects very low, especially in drawing, handwork, and science.

<sup>7</sup>The Competency certificate has also been abolished.



The educational policy of New Zealand has always stressed the need for giving the country child the same educational opportunity as the town child. There has never been any difference in teaching hours or length of term. And until recently a remote allowance has been paid to country teachers to encourage the better qualified to work in rural areas. Furthermore, all teachers must spend at least two years in the country to obtain promotion.<sup>8</sup> This policy has meant that the country child has generally received exactly the same type of instruction. Although the syllabus permits of a wider activity for country children, teachers are inclined to think of the city child in drawing up their timetables. In Littledene, where an attempt has been made to make the course practical, and gardening and agricultural club work are encouraged, the headmaster complained that such specifically rural work had to be done in addition to the work usually undertaken by the city school. The Proficiency certificate allows for questions in rural science—otherwise there is no difference between the papers set for country children and those set in the towns.

The Proficiency certificate exerts a strong influence on the timetable from the moment the child leaves the infant room, as the following study of the Littledene School revealed. For purposes of comparison the subjects have been put in the same divisions as they appear in the Proficiency regulations. The subject *English* includes reading, recitation, comprehension, formal grammar, spelling, poetry and writing. Handwork in Forms I and II includes woodwork and cookery taught by itinerant instructors with Littledene as a centre.

<sup>8</sup>There is no special training of teachers for rural work. All teachers receive training in rural school organisation at the Training Colleges in 'Model Rural Schools,' but they are schools of city children, with a city teacher in a city environment. No attempt has been made to train teachers in a rural setting, nor is rural sociology included in the course.

*Time Spent in Studies in Hours Per Week*

<i>Standard</i>	<i>English</i>	<i>Arithmetic</i>	<i>History</i>	<i>Geography</i>	<i>Science</i>	<i>Drawing</i>	<i>Handwork</i>	<i>Singing</i>	<i>Drill</i>	<i>Scripture</i>
Std. I	11.5	3.0	—	—	1.0	1.5	3.0	1.6	1.25	0.5
Std. II	11.0	3.0	1.0	0.6	1.0	1.5	2.0	1.6	1.25	0.5
Std. III	11.25	3.3	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.5	1.5	1.4	1.25	0.5
Std. IV	9.75	4.3	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.5	2.0	1.75	1.25	0.5
Std. V	9.75	4.3	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.75	2.0	1.75	1.25	0.5
Std. VI	10.0	5.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.75	1.5	1.0	1.25	0.5

From the above it will be seen that the time spent in the various subjects is roughly proportional to the marks awarded for those subjects in the Proficiency examination, with some extra bias in favour of English and arithmetic. No doubt both the certificate and the timetable reflect the official conception of the relative importance of these subjects of instruction.

*Secondary Education.* Pupils gaining a Competency or a Proficiency certificate are entitled to Junior Free Places for two years in Secondary, Technical, or District High Schools. At the end of two years, successful candidates in the Intermediate Examination are granted Senior Free Places tenable until the age of nineteen.<sup>9</sup> In Littledene the majority of qualified primary pupils continue their education at the secondary department of their school.

It will be seen that slightly over a fifth of the pupils who pass through Std. VI leave school without receiving any further education. To these must be added those who finally leave school before reaching Std. VI. A study of the school records showed that 32 of the contemporaries of the Std. VI pupils had left before Std. VI was reached.

<sup>9</sup>A system of accrediting is largely used in connection with this examination. Only pupils of doubtful qualifications are required to sit. A wide range of subjects is allowed, English, arithmetic, and handwriting alone being compulsory. This arrangement permits of a liberal course for the first two secondary years.

*Destination of 120 Pupils Leaving Std. VI 1930-1934*

	1930	1931	1932	1933	1934	Total	Percentage
Continued at Littledene D.H.S. -	20	14	21	7	14	76	63.3̄
Continued at other Secondary Schools - - - -	1	0	3	1	5	10	8.3̄
Continued another year in Primary Schools - - - -	1	1	0	0	5	7	5.8̄
Left School without further Education - - - -	4	4	10	4	5	27	22.50
Totals - - - -	26	19	34	12	29	120	100.00

This makes a total of 59, or nearly 39 per cent, who leave school without proceeding to secondary school education. Littledene thus sends just over sixty per cent of its children to post-primary schools—a figure which is well above the average for New Zealand.<sup>10</sup> This high percentage is augmented no doubt by the economic depression: it was found impossible to obtain reliable figures for years prior to 1930. There is, however, ample evidence to show that secondary education is becoming more popular. The admission register of the District High School shows that during the first decade of the school's existence the average number of new entrants each year was 9.8: the average during the second decade was 15.8. The average time spent in the secondary department is two years.

The usual criticism levelled at rural teaching in New Zealand is that it prepares pupils solely for academic pursuits and is of little value to the boy or girl who stays in the country. In order to bring the school curriculum closer to the needs of the pupils, the high-school teacher made a beginning in 1923 to provide a wider choice of subjects. After some experiment, two courses were provided: the academic course leading to Matriculation and the rural course which aimed at giving a sound education to the

<sup>10</sup> 54 per cent of primary pupils continue their education to a higher standard.—*A. to J.*, E-1, 1935.

farm-life boy or the home-life girl. An attempt was made to get as much practical work as possible into both courses, and to-day there is considerable scope for individual specialisation. The following shows the subjects taken in each complete course:—

*Subjects Common to Both courses.*—English, History and Civics, Art Appreciation, Singing, Musical Appreciation, Physical Drill, Elementary Arithmetic, Woodwork (boys), Cookery (girls).

*Academic Course.*—French, Mathematics, Chemistry (boys), Home Science (girls).

*Rural-Housecraft.*—Economics,<sup>11</sup> Geography, Farm Accounts,<sup>12</sup> Agriculture (boys), Orchard work and Horticulture (girls), Metalwork (boys), Craftwork (girls).

In 1935 exactly half the pupils took each course. Sixty per cent came from farm homes; the parents of the others were civil servants, tradesmen, etc. In order to see how far the curriculum was meeting the needs of the pupils when they left school, the same teacher made a survey of 238 ex-pupils of the District High School. These were the first 238 enrolled from the opening of the secondary department in 1913 to the beginning of 1931. All of these had found permanent employment. Fortunately, there was a roll of all pupils of the school—a kind of ‘Who’s Who’—begun some years ago by the School Council with a view to keeping in touch with ex-pupils. It had been kept up-to-date and a school reunion made it an easy matter to check the occupations of the old pupils.

<sup>11</sup>The study of economics is based on the *New Zealand Year Book* and on Sir Norman Angell’s *The Money Game*. This latter book has proved most successful in teaching elementary principles of economic theory. The Littledene pupils were found to be getting considerable pleasure from playing the money game in their own time.

<sup>12</sup>Farm Accounts. For this subject the necessary accounts are obtained from a local farm.

*Nature of Work of Ex-Pupils**Boys (111)*

	<i>Number Percentage</i>	
Farming—own land or father's farm	39	35.1
Farm labourers - - - - -	19	17.1
Occupations connected with farming	3	2.7
Trades - - - - -	6	5.4
Engineering - - - - -	2	1.8
Public Service - - - - -	11	9.9
Shop Assistants - - - - -	4	3.6
Office work - - - - -	6	5.4
Teaching - - - - -	3	2.7
Not traced - - - - -	18	16.2

*Girls (127)*

	<i>Number Percentage</i>	
Helping in Home, or Married - -	67	52.8
Domestic Service - - - - -	14	11.0
Nursing - - - - -	10	7.9
Office work - - - - -	5	3.9
Shop Assistants - - - - -	11	8.7
Public Service - - - - -	1	.8
Trades - - - - -	2	1.6
Teaching - - - - -	7	5.5
Music Teaching - - - - -	3	2.4
Not traced - - - - -	7	5.5

Thus 54.9 per cent of the boys follow farming pursuits while 63.8 per cent of the girls are occupied in the home. These figures justify the attempt that has been made to introduce non-academic studies; only two per cent of the pupils continued an academic course to the University.

*The Curriculum.* The secondary department of the District High School is in no sense a Technical School, nor does it pretend to give any vocational training. The statement of aim prefixed to its scheme of work quotes Pro-

fessor Cyril Burt's evidence before the Consultative Committee on the Education of the Adolescent (*Hadow Report*): 'Education consists . . . in implanting specific habits, memories, ideas, forms of manual and mental skill, intellectual interests, moral ideas and a knowledge not only of facts and conclusions but also of methods.' It also quotes Professor Dewey—'A genuine idealism, and one compatible with science, will emerge as soon as philosophy accepts the teaching of science that ideas are statements, not of what is or has been, but of acts to be performed. For then mankind will learn that, intellectually (that is, save for the aesthetic enjoyment they afford, which is, of course a true value), ideas are worthless except as they pass into actions which rearrange in some way, be it little or large, the world in which we live.'<sup>13</sup>

To carry out these ideals the school, in the absence of expensive equipment, has co-opted the community to give a living setting for its work. One or two examples will serve as illustrations. There is no school farm for the teaching of agriculture but there are many farmers willing to experiment. An arrangement was made with a scientifically inclined farmer for certain experiments to be carried out. The Department of Agriculture gave every possible assistance. The arrangement has worked reasonably well and large scale experiments on irrigation of lucerne, the use of lucerne hay for winter feeding, the fattening of lambs and the response of various breeds to the same type of feeding, the use of mangels as a spring-time ration for sheep, the value of top-dressing of pastures, the use of lupins in the laying down of permanent pastures, etc., have been carried out under ordinary farm conditions. Farmers frequently give talks on their particular interests.

A senior Home Science class undertook to do a nutrition survey of all the pupils of the school. This led to a

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<sup>13</sup>Dewey, John, *The Quest for Certainty*, London, 1930, p. 133.

milk ration being provided for 32 children and this in turn led to studies in pasteurisation and testing of milk. The need for vitamins in the diet led to the planting of an orchard designed to supply a family with fresh or preserved fruit throughout the year—and at the same time small enough to be attended without interfering with the major work of the farm. As an outcome of the orchard work, school nursery plots have been started. The pupils learn methods of propagation and the trees are used to stock home-orchards on the plan of the school plot. In the woodwork and metalwork classes useful articles are made and home repairing is done.

On the more academic side a setting is provided for English studies by means of the drama. Every year one or two plays are acted—and the whole production is undertaken by the pupils with the direction of the teacher. The last play produced was 'A Midsummer Night's Dream'—only slightly abridged. It was a project of the whole school, primary and secondary. The infant department supplied the fairies, the secondary department the other actors. The scenery, properties, dresses and lighting effects were all made by the school. The play was produced in the Town Hall Little Theatre to a large audience. Thus the work of the school is shared with the larger community.

The secondary department of the school is such a small unit that problems of discipline hardly ever arise. For many years the conduct of the department has been in the hands of a School Council with elected representatives from each form. The President and the Secretary of the Council are the real powers behind the throne. The teacher has the power of veto which nowadays, after ten years of the Council's life, is seldom exercised; and he never attends a meeting of the School Council except by invitation. In this way the experience of the teacher is always available to the Council; the pupils come to regard

him as an expert to be consulted, not as a dictator to be obeyed.

*Religious Education.* Religious education is provided for in the many Sunday School and Bible Class groups. Almost every child in the school attends Sunday School. In addition one half hour per week of school time is given to Scripture. The local clergy have the right of entry to the schools by arrangement with the School Committee, under what is known as the Nelson scheme—so named from the town where it was first tried. Each clergyman takes a class, irrespective of the denominations of the children composing it. Except for some complaints by Anglicans who objected to their children learning Salvation Army hymns, the scheme seems to have worked well. Roman Catholic children go to their own church for religious instruction during the school Scripture period; the parents of these children thus have the 'right of substitution' as suggested long ago by Professor J. J. Findlay.<sup>14</sup>

*Medical Inspection of Schools.* The Department of Health maintains a staff of school doctors and nurses in each of the chief centres of New Zealand. Under this organisation the children of Littledene are given three complete physical examinations during their school life. Every effort is made to have the parents present during this examination; parents are notified in writing of any defects and the nurses do their best to see that treatment follows. In addition to the complete examination, partial examinations are made annually. A number of schools now have dental clinics: Littledene does not yet support one, but from time to time children whose parents cannot afford to pay are conveyed by bus to the city hospital for dental treatment.

*Nutrition of Children.* The children of Littledene have been given a good start in life through the Plunket

<sup>14</sup>Findlay, J. J., *The School*, London, 1919, p. 112.



Society. It was necessary to determine whether this was maintained in later years. For this purpose a nutrition survey was made of the children attending the school. The work of this survey was centred in the senior Home Science class of the secondary department of the school. At the beginning and end of each term the children were carefully weighed and accurately measured for height. From these results the percentage deviation from normal was recorded and the children were classified into nutrition groups. Ten per cent below normal weight was looked upon as malnutrition. In the absence of a set of norms for New Zealand the Toronto age-height-weight scale was used; and while the results were misleading when the total nutrition of the school was considered, yet each record card gave a very valuable indication of the health of the individual child. It was possible to see at a glance whether the child was maintaining his nutrition index—whether he was gaining or losing ground—and to look for causes of any continued deficiency.

The record cards contained as complete a set of data concerning the home-life of the child as could be obtained. The occupations of parents, the type of home, the number in the family, and any change in economic status—e.g. if the father became unemployed—were all recorded. The record cards were then classified into three groups according to the occupations of the parents—(a) farmers and farm labourers; (b) business, professional and wage earning; (c) unemployed. It was found that normal nutrition, sub-nutrition and malnutrition were evenly distributed over the three groups. There seemed to be, however, a marked similarity in the nutrition index of all the members of the same family. Was this due to heredity or to a family dietetic habit?

The data of the nutrition survey are still too incomplete and the methods of calculating norms too crude to

draw any valid conclusions from them. They give, however, the general trend. From the time that the Plunket nurse ceases making her weekly examination early in the second year until the children enter school in their sixth year, about fifteen per cent of the children lose ground which is not made up during school years. As a result of the first preliminary survey, it was decided to attack the problem of child nutrition from every possible angle. Lectures on diet, on regular habits, on the need for adequate sleep, etc. were delivered to parents. Bulletins on these subjects were sent home. A group of 32 children were given a pint of pasteurised milk every day at school. Parents were advised to increase the children's milk ration and to increase the fruit and green vegetable content of the diet. As a result of this work, the percentage of malnutrition was halved in fifteen months.

The experiment shows the need for carrying the methods of the Plunket Society through the whole period of childhood. To bring the general level of the health of children up to the highest possible standard, it is necessary for each mother to be advised on the nutrition of her boy or girl in childhood just as she was in infancy. The school seems to be the place for this to be done. The professional educator may object that this is not part of the function of the school. The teacher in charge of the nutrition survey, however, was very much in favour of the work being extended. He instanced the case of a boy with a high intelligence quotient, a low nutrition index and a mediocre achievement in school work. The boy was put on a milk ration at school, his nutrition improved, and by the end of the year his achievement was well in line with his intelligence. 'What is the use of giving such a boy more geometry and algebra to improve his achievement in school work when it is calcium and phosphorous he needs?' commented the teacher.

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## CHAPTER VIII

### ADULT EDUCATION

THE coming of a new vision in education, with its school courses closely related to the life of the people, was not entirely a development from within the Little Society of the district. The Great Society has a way of making itself felt in out-of-the-way places mainly by technological penetration; it is seldom that it brings about a change through a new vision of learning. Yet this happened in Littledene in 1920 by the advent of a new idea—that of adult education: and this penetration marks a new era in the social organisation of the community.

Adult education for the people came to New Zealand in 1914 in the form of a branch of the Workers' Educational Association organised as in England. It was not long, however, before the Director of Studies for the W.E.A. in Christchurch realised that something should be done to introduce classes to country districts of Canterbury Province. He did much to spread the idea by travelling to centres within reasonable distance of the city and organising and teaching classes in economics.<sup>1</sup> During the

<sup>1</sup>Cf. 'The Workers' Educational Association in England has never prospered greatly in rural areas. In the Dominions the same is true; where the Workers' Educational Association has prospered in rural areas, for example, in New Zealand, it has won success through the adoption of educational methods (the circulation of lectures and illustrative material in boxes and the formation of discussion groups) which have no counterpart in England.' Douie, Charles, *Beyond the Sunset*, London, 1935, p. 272. The work of rural W.E.A. groups in New Zealand is a distinct contribution to the theory of Adult Education.

Christmas-New Year week of 1920-21 he organised, in connection with the W.E.A., the first adult summer school to be held in New Zealand. Littledene township was chosen as the location of the school—a choice which was destined to have very far-reaching effects on the district.<sup>2</sup>

The year 1920 is also an important one in the history of education in New Zealand from the fact that it marks the appointment of the first Professor of Education at Canterbury University College. The Professor brought with him the enthusiasm for the new education that characterised the early years of post-war Europe. His intimate knowledge of the Arts generally and of drama in particular gave a new turn to the study of education. He consented to act as director of studies for the Littledene Summer School and a number of professors of Canterbury College co-operated. The impression made on the community by this first summer school was so great that there was created a definite demand for adult education in the district. There was no opportunity for filling this need until in 1923 a man with some experience in adult education was appointed to the secondary department of the District High School. He began by holding informal groups for play-reading, and poetry-reading in his own home. It soon became known that on Saturday evenings people were dropping in to hear a play or poetry, to have supper and to discuss the topics of the week. In the next year the Director of Studies suggested that this high school teacher should form a branch of the W.E.A. in Littledene.

Accordingly, in June 1924, a branch of the W.E.A. was established and a new type of social organisation was inaugurated. It was made very clear that the immediate aim of the classes was to provide a platform for discussion of matters of common interest. A more remote aim was

<sup>2</sup>See Appendix.

to attempt to make life in the country more worth living through an exploration of the treasures of literature and art that are too often forgotten in the bustle of pioneering days. The W.E.A., unconsciously at the beginning, but more deliberately later on, undertook a unique function in the community—that of correlating and giving meaning to the various educational organisations of the district. The tutor was in a good strategic position to bring this about; his connection with the school put him in direct touch with the educational needs of the district as a whole; in addition he availed himself of every opportunity to address Church, lodge, farmers' and other groups.

Since 1924 classes have been conducted regularly through the winter months, and subjects studied to date are English Literature, Psychology, Art, Music, Economics, Child Psychology, Drama, and World Affairs. The records of the classes show that one quarter of the adults of Littledene have attended at one time or another, and the order of preference in studies is Drama, Psychology, Art, Literature, World Affairs, Economics, and Music. Those students who had attended for three years or more were asked to state in what ways the classes had proved of value to them. The replies were many and various, but the general tenor of their remarks was that it gave one something to think about and the week passed more quickly in consequence. It has been objected that these people are not 'serious students,' whatever that may be. In the University sense they are not. It must be remembered, however, that they are occupied all day and every day in the serious business of farm and home. In this important work they are more or less efficient. They do not want to become intellectuals; the classes offer no rewards other than the satisfactions that come from organising leisure and making an effective use of it.

The most important results of the classes, however, have been the incidental and unexpected ones. In the early days of the movement in Littledene the question of consolidation of schools came up. The tutor lectured on the subject and the classes became an important influence in forming public opinion. There is no doubt that consolidation was expedited through the adult classes: through them also the balance in favour of an open air school was created. In the second year of the adult classes a separate group was formed for the study and production of plays. At that time the old hall which had served the community for nearly half a century was in a state of decay. The floor was so worn that it was dangerous for dancing, and for a long time people had felt that money should be raised to provide a new one. Working under very great difficulties, the Drama Circle of the W.E.A. began the production of plays in this hall. There was no electric light, no scenery, no equipment of any sort, and the seating accommodation consisted of some uncomfortable benches. Using paperhanger's scrim for curtains and motor-cycle headlights (with cycles attached) for floods, the Drama Circle put on its first play. The result was so satisfactory to the players as well as to the audience that the Circle was encouraged to continue. For the first seven years of its life it produced plays in this old hall.

The result of this policy was that when the erection of a new hall 'to meet every social need of a rural community' was seriously considered, the needs of the drama were fully recognised and the main hall was built and equipped as a little theatre. In an average year, five or six short plays and one full-length play are produced, and there is general agreement that drama is now taking an important place in the rural life of Littledene, one young farmer saying that the little theatre was almost his mental and spiritual home. Later developments of the Drama

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Circle are a girls' club and boys' club for juniors anxious to study eurhythmics or gymnasium, folk dancing, and first aid.

It is important to note that the animating idea of the studies in the adult classes, and to a lesser extent in the school as well, is that of education through a constantly expanding awareness of community. Thus, in the school, learning is associated with the work of the neighbourhood—in the homes and on the farms. Agriculture is taught by observation of experiments amid actual working conditions; geography begins with a study of the world's farms and gardens and goes on to explore how the products of these are distributed and exchanged. History becomes a study of the communities of the past, many of which are revealed through literature and the drama.

These studies are continued in the adult classes. Early in 1928, for instance, a discussion was held on the insularity of outlook of New Zealand in general and of Little-dene in particular. Someone suggested that the time was ripe for a study of group life abroad, so the literature and drama classes gave an international turn to their studies. Eugene O'Neill's *Emperor Jones* and *All God's Chillun Got Wings* were used as an introduction to the study of the American Negro problem. Edward Thompson's *Atonement* helped to make the problems of India very real to the students, and Shaw's *John Bull's Other Island* did as much for Ireland.

From this time onward the international idea was never lost sight of. In the next year a series on the international character of art was undertaken, thus introducing a very much needed study in an art-starved community. In music, plastic art and literature, talks were given on the great international figures.

*Attendance.* Up to the end of 1934, when the classes had been running for eleven years, 234 individuals had

attended the Monday evening class. Their attendances have been as follows:—

7 students attended for 8 consecutive years					
7	”	”	”	7	”
8	”	”	”	6	”
16	”	”	”	5	”
16	”	”	”	4	”
25	”	”	”	3	”
55	”	”	”	2	”
100	”	”	”	1	year

Half of these lived within one mile of the lecture hall; the other half travelled from two to ten miles.

In 1930, at the end of the seventh year, a detailed survey of the lecture classes was made. Of the 203 individuals who had attended there were 75 men and 128 women. The criticism often made in connection with the W.E.A. in New Zealand that it does not reach the people it was intended to reach is answered by the fact that of the 75 men 46 were farmers, 17 were manual workers and 12 were teachers or professional men. And 37 were married and 38 single. An analysis of their ages showed that 17 were under 20, 17 were between 20 and 30, 13 between 30 and 40, and 28 were over 40.

Of the 128 women students who attended, 85 were occupied in the home, and 43 were teachers, nurses, shop assistants, etc.: 42 were married and 86 single. The ages of the women students showed that 35 were under 20, 40 were between 20 and 30, 19 between 30 and 40, and 34 were over 40. Of the 85 women employed in the home, 47 were the wives or daughters of farmers: adding these to the 46 men occupied in farming we get 93 farm people—nearly 46% of the total enrolments. These figures prove that the appeal of the W.E.A. classes was fairly general over all classes of the community and over all ages. The figures refer to the lectures only, as their appeal was the



wider. Figures for the Drama Circle were not included in the count, because the study of drama calls for numberless meetings for study and rehearsal according to the needs of the moment. No records of the attendance at Drama Circles were kept.

*Books.* In the early days of the classes the problem of securing books was a difficult one. With so many people living on a budget controlled by a stock firm (which, of course, did not deal in books), it was almost impossible for students to acquire any. A small annual grant from the District Council of the W.E.A. made it possible to get about a hundred volumes together and in addition the tutor's own library was available. But the great need was always books and more books. In 1930 a grant from the Carnegie Corporation of New York financed a travelling library for rural areas. For five years it visited Littledene fortnightly and provided books in generous measure. For the past two years it has been sending out a monthly hamper from its headquarters.

*The Women's Division.* A recent development which promises to have an important bearing on adult education is the Women's Division of the Farmers' Union. This organisation meets monthly and has at the moment of writing a membership of ninety. The meetings are sociable affairs largely dominated by afternoon tea. And the lectures usually have a close relationship to the culinary art in which all of the members are more or less expert. In spite of this, however, the organisation is on definitely progressive lines and can be depended upon to lend its support to drama and other activities of an educational nature. Talks on Art, First Aid, Picture Framing, and International Relations have been given recently by visiting lecturers. There is every indication that it is helping to make the lot of the farmer's wife much more interesting.

*A Room for Study.* The chief weakness of the adult work is that it has no lecture room of its own. A comfortably furnished library room with a supply of books and periodicals, a room open to students in the evenings when farm kitchens are crowded and uncomfortable, would do much to encourage purposeful study. It seems to the writer that the position would best be met by an extension of the school premises to permit of adult work. There is so much school equipment, such as maps, scientific apparatus and books, that could be used in the evenings if suitable accommodation were provided for adults. The addition of an adult meeting room and library would turn the Littledene consolidated school into a village college on the lines of Sawston in Cambridgeshire.<sup>3</sup> But with this difference—Sawston began in a village with little community life: everything had to be built up. Littledene, in common with many another farm township in New Zealand, has already developed a vigorous community spirit. It needs only vision to launch the community on new voyages of intellectual and spiritual discovery.

<sup>3</sup>See Morris, H. *The Village College, Being a Memorandum on the Provision of Educational and Social Facilities for the Countryside, with Special Reference to Cambridgeshire*. Cambridge University Press. 1929.

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## CHAPTER IX

### CONCLUSION

THE casual visitor may come to Littledene and form an impression of a sleepy little township in a delightful setting of farmlands and wooded hills. He may take long walks in the shade of New Zealand beeches—tall old ever-green trees with black trunks like living velvet—trees whose branches are hung in early summer with the blood-red flowers of the native mistletoe. Every now and then in his walk he will emerge suddenly upon cultivated farmlands with English grasses underfoot, an English lark singing overhead and English sheep, Southdowns, Border Leicesters or Romneys, growing fat for the English market. He may go for a day's shooting of deer and wild pigs in the hills, or rabbits on the plains. He will wander through the streets of the township, call at the club, the library, the blacksmith's, the bookseller's, and inevitably decide that this would be a delightful setting for his old age, but not for youth.

The close observer, on the other hand, sees this life of the country as one of sustained activity. If the work of the 1,800 inhabitants were concentrated on one square mile instead of 300, here would be bustle such as the city never knew. The farmer does not wear his heart on his sleeve; he is apt to regard the stranger with some suspicion. He is engaged in the difficult and uncertain business of farming and experience has taught him not to make friends too easily and to keep his thoughts to

himself. On closer acquaintance, however, the average farmer is seen as a power in his community. He owns a motor car and is a member of the Workingmen's Club, which he visits at least once a week; he is also a member of a Friendly Society or Lodge. He is a sportsman, interested in games and horse racing; he reads the newspaper every day, and he or his family takes books from the Club Library. He tunes in on the radio for at least half an hour every day. He is a member of at least one local farmers' organisation and is a supporter of a Church. In the cosmic scheme, for him at least, Littledene comes first. Every two or three weeks he goes to a community-owned cinema. Throughout the winter he spares an evening now and then for a progressive euchre party, a dance or a social. It is his custom to give something from the farm every time a Church is organising a bazaar. Every sale day at least one member of his family supports the afternoon tea in aid of this and that. He doesn't enquire very closely what the aim of any charity is, provided it is for a local need. He believes in 'keeping money in the district.'

His wife is a member of the Women's Division of the Farmers' Union or one or more of half-a-dozen women's societies. His children are born in a well-equipped public hospital. His wife is given every possible help in the care of her young children through the agency of the Plunket Society. When his children go to school they are taught in a modern open-air consolidated school from which they proceed to the District High School. Here they may qualify for University Entrance or they may take a farm-home course. It is probable that most of his children will stay in the country and follow farming pursuits. His own education and that of his children need not stop with the end of school days. The adult classes organised through the W.E.A. offer him courses in Literature, Art, Drama, Psychology, etc. If he lives too

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far away to attend classes, he may still receive books from the travelling library, or he may participate in the 'box scheme' and receive fortnightly from the city a box containing a lecture, pictures, gramophone records, etc. One farmer in four makes use of one or other of these adult education facilities.

There are, of course, exceptions to the average farmer here depicted. At the far end of the tussock land there is one who tries to stand aloof from the 'village life.' He would prefer the English organisation of farming—of village squire and tenant farmers. He is sceptical of the value of adult education; he thinks that the schools are going too far in their methods of teaching. He goes in his car to the city for his entertainment; he gives freely to the Church but will not support anything connected with the new education. At the other extreme is the ignorant farmer who has become wealthy through long years of hard work and miserly through a life of abnegation. He fears that the average farmer is far too prodigal in his spending. He knows that modern methods of education will produce a race of idlers and paupers. He never went beyond the second standard himself and is none the worse for it. The more education you have the more you want to spend. He is a pathetic figure.

Outside the ranks of farmers there are many who have the welfare of the district at heart—many who have given a lead to social and educational advances of the past decade. There is the doctor. He has long years of service on the school committee to his credit and at all times he may be relied on to throw his weight into any move for the welfare of the child. It was partly through his persistence that consolidation of schools came about—mainly through his advice that the people asked for an open-air school. He has also been responsible for the policy of a carefully controlled cinema in the district.

Reference has already been made to the work of the

teachers, past and present, in the social side of the community life. The development of an education suited to the needs of the people by taking the school work out into the farms and homes, the development of adult education and the drama, the encouragement of sports' and other clubs—all these are due to the enthusiasm of teachers who refused to confine their educational work within the four walls of the school. They have aimed at making the school the social and intellectual centre of the countryside.

The community life in Littledene is inclusive enough and sufficiently undifferentiated to permit of education taking its true place as a social force. Cities are so complicated in structure that the educator faces almost insuperable difficulties in his attempt to meet the needs of the people. But even if the very necessary co-ordination of services is lacking in the cities, they are well supplied with educational facilities for those who have wit enough to make use of them. By comparison the country is starved of educational opportunity, but it more than makes up for this deficiency in community solidarity. Its social life may have little direction; it may be dissipated in the service of unworthy aims; but underlying it all are forces that are the educator's opportunity. This study of Littledene has convinced the writer that the new education with its emphasis on the social nature of man need go no farther than the country to establish itself and demonstrate the true meaning of all that has been said and written on the subject of man and community. After all, half the world still lives in the country—and half the other half wishes it did.

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## APPENDIX

*Page 1. The Economic Boundary.* This was determined by plotting on a survey map the place of residence of those farmers who made Littledene their buying and selling centre. A similar method was used to find the social boundary. In U.S.A. Edmund de S. Brunner found that the economic community area was much larger than the social area—i.e. that there were people living in a sort of social no-man's-land. Vide *Village Communities* (Doubleday Doran), 1928, p. 33. Around Littledene there are small neighbourhoods within the economic area and these have perhaps a church or a school of their own. But in every instance the people interviewed had some contact with Littledene through one or other of its social organisations. The farmer usually makes some social contacts where he does his business.

For method of determining community boundaries, see *American Agricultural Villages*—Edmund de S. Brunner (Doran), p. 51. See also *Surveying Your Community* by the same author, p. 27.

*Page 38. Organised Groups.* The following list of all the organised groups is a formidable one for a community of 1,800 people. Some of the women of Littledene belong to as many as ten groups.

*Voluntary Local Government.* County Council, Consolidated School Committees, three sole-charge School Committees.

*Groups organised for Public Welfare.* Benevolent and Improvement League, Plunket Society for Health of Women and Children, Women's Christian Temperance Union, Young People's branch W.C.T.U., Mothers' Union (Inter-denominational), Hospital Ladies' Visiting Committee, Women's Division of the Farmers' Union, Farmers' Union, Young Farmers' Club, Agricultural and Pastoral Association, Library Committee, Brass Band, Old Pupils' Association.

*Groups of Mutual Benefit.* Two Oddfellows' Lodges, Orange Lodge, Masonic Lodge.

*Adult Education.* The Workers' Educational Association, Drama Circle, Girls' Club.

*Churches.* Anglican, Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian, Salvation Army, Roman Catholic, Plymouth Brethren, Pentecostal, Seventh Day Adventists, Christians. (Within the above Church groups there are 10 Sunday Schools, 7 Bible Classes, 3 Young People's Guilds and 5 groups meeting regularly for choir practice.)

*Groups Organised for Amusement and Sport.* Workingmen's Club, Collie Club, Football Club, Cricket Club, Tennis Club, Bowling Club, Croquet Club, Basketball Club, Sports' Association Club, Boy Scouts.

For a discussion of social organisation in American villages see E. de S. Brunner, *Village Communities*, Chapter VII.

*Page 41. Benevolent and Improvement League.* A typical entry in the minutes of the Benevolent and Improvement League reads, 'The case of Mrs. X was considered. Mrs. X, a widow, is at present in hospital. Three of her children are living with Mrs. Y and one with Mrs. Z. She is earning nothing and will not be able to earn anything for some time. Dr. A moved that the sum of £10 be placed at the disposal of the executive to disburse in the interests of Mrs. X. Seconded by Mr. B and carried.'

The League's interest in education is best illustrated by its regulations for the award of an annual Natural Science bursary, here quoted in full.

- (1) With a view to encouraging individual scientific study in the District High School, the B. and I. League make an annual grant of £5 for that purpose.
- (2) The child has naturally an enquiring mind, especially towards Nature, and his enquiry should be a venture on his part.
- (3) In order to encourage this venture, each child can make his own choice of pursuit—i.e. botany, geology, entomology, physiography, etc. It is essential that the child should get his first knowledge from Nature, not from books.
- (4) It may be that a child may make trials in many fields before it discovers its particular bias. These preliminary researches will be recognised by the League.
- (5) It is suggested that candidates for the bursary make notes, gather specimens, draw diagrams and write descriptions which show in an intelligent form the result of their researches.
- (6) and (7) refer to the judging of the merit of the work, etc.
- (8) The *sine qua non* of the whole scheme is that the child must rely on his own unaided effort for discovery, coming to his teacher or to his books only to help him over difficulties which prove insurmountable.



- (9) Whenever a bursary is granted, it shall be looked upon, not as a reward but rather as an inducement to further study in the subject chosen by the bursar and the award shall consist of instruments or books having a direct bearing on the subject of study.

In the fifteen years of its existence the League has made the following grants:—

Gifts to the Sports' Clubs - - - -	£	202
"    "    Schools - - - -		167
"    "    Band - - - -		74
Purchase of Old Hall - - - -		400
Gift towards New Hall - - - -		1,050
Grants in relief of distress - - - -		628
Paid in local wages to picture operator, etc.		1,503
		<hr/>
		£4,024

These figures show money disbursed in Littledene from the *net* profits of the League. They do not include amounts paid for film hire, etc.

*Page 58. Reading Habits of Littledene.* In 1931 a survey of the reading habits of Littledene was made. 100 copies of a questionnaire were sent out: 70 were returned, 20 of which were supplemented by a personal interview.

It was found that the time spent in newspaper reading was high—averaging 40 minutes per day. A number of people said that they read the paper 'right through.' In the matter of news the following preferences were given:—

Cables and Foreign news - - -	29.8	per cent
Market rates - - - -	13.6	" "
Sport - - - -	13.0	" "
Christchurch news - - - -	13.0	" "
Littledene news - - - -	12.4	" "
Women's column and fashions -	8.0	" "
Leading articles - - - -	1.9	" "
Parliamentary news - - - -	1.9	" "
Correspondence - - - -	1.9	" "
Miscellaneous - - - -	4.3	" "

55% of the people questioned took books from a library and these people bought no books during the year. The average number of books bought per annum was 2.4 and these were all fiction of the cheaper variety. Ten per cent read no books at all. 64 per cent of the people preferred books of fiction, 26 per cent travel, biography and history, while 10 per cent preferred books of an instructive nature—i.e. how to make things, books on farming, etc.

*Page 88. The Summer School.* In view of subsequent developments in Littledene the programme of this school is of interest. The following subjects were dealt with at the lectures:—Education, Mediæval Miracle and Mystery Plays, Modern Miracle and Mystery Plays, Elocution, Drama, Art of the Nineteenth Century, Art and Industry, the Growth of English Towns, Economic Change, Economic Problems in New Zealand, the Economics of Health, English Folk Songs, The Comparative Use of History, Historical Survey of Relation of Town and Country, Administrative Relations of Town and Country, Local Government, Human Nature and Personality, Industrial Unrest, Currency and Credit, Folk Dancing, Botany and Geology Rambles.

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